The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

OCTOBER 35c

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The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

including BLACK MASK MAGAZINE

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **HAROLD R. DANIELS**

TITLE: ***The Master Stroke***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: New Haven

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Harry the Jackal had an almost foolproof scheme. In the beginning he succeeded every fifth time. Then he discovered the master stroke, the psychological clincher.*

IT ISN'T EASY TO FIND FAULT WITH A scheme like Harry the Jackal's. It worked successfully for ten years, although this is as much a tribute to the care Harry took with his preparations as to the basic scheme itself. And to the fact that he wasn't greedy.

Harry's needs were not great—twelve thousand dollars a year was his planned income. Of course, it was tax free. The scheme never did actually fail but Harry the Jackal was never quite the same man after the incident in New Haven. He never was able to work up the sinister arrogance that was so vital an ingredient in his *modus operandi*. He could no longer believe in people, and so he could no longer make them believe in him.

Harry arrived in New Haven on a Greyhound bus at nine-thirty on a rain-washed April evening—a purposely nondescript little man in his fifties. The ride had been a long one—all the way from Philadelphia—and he looked a shade travel-worn.

The girl at the bus terminal newsstand who sold him the early edition of the Sunday paper smiled at him in sympathy and thought he looked quite a bit like her own father, tired with the years of straining to bring up a large family. She handed him a dry paper from the middle of the stack that the porter had just brought in. She would, she decided, save the wet ones for Yale students. Harry returned the girl's smile, picked up his bag, and walked out into the street. Across from the terminal a big hotel turned the sky rosy with neon. Farther down the street another hotel an-

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nounced its rates less shamelessly.

Harry registered in the cheaper hotel, was given Room 304, borrowed a City Directory, and went upstairs.

Room 304 was small, with faded wallpaper, a narrow bed, and a mismated desk and chair. Harry sat at the desk and peeled the comics, the women's pages, and the sporting section from his newspaper like limp leaves of lettuce. He glanced briefly at the front page which carried a banner headline. "Assailant of Broad Street Woman Still at Large." The story began: "Police reported no progress today in their efforts to apprehend the brutal assailant of Mrs. Henry Mitchell who was viciously slugged and beaten when she apparently surprised an intruder in her home late Saturday afternoon."

He was searching for the classified ads. When he found them he turned at once to the section marked Loans. There were at least two dozen insertions. From long experience Harry had learned to avoid the real sharks whose ads gave only telephone numbers.

He marked the chain loan agencies carefully with a pencil. Some of them had taken regular ads on the classified pages—on the outside positions of the page. They featured halftones of smiling, philanthropic men. "Come in and see me," the ads invited. "Ask for Mr. Benedetto (or Mr. Stone or Mr. Weiss). $50 to $500 on your signature alone."

Harry studied one of the pictures carefully. It was that of Mr. Oakley of Seacoast Brokers, Inc. Mr. Oakley had a long narrow face with hooded eyes. Even in the blurry halftone his smile looked forced. A very mean-natured man, Harry decided. He rather hoped that he would be doing business with Mr. Oakley.

He took a notebook from his breast pocket and opened it. The pages were filled with neat entries. One of them read: Seacoast Brokers, Trenton, N. J., August 1957—$3000. Harry sighed. Too near and too soon.

He studied the ads again. Commerce Discount House featured a Mr. Snavely whose photograph revealed a balding man of about thirty-five, with a worried frown and a rabbitty chin and mouth. A likely candidate, since there were no entries in his notebook for Commerce Discount House.

Harry reached for the city directory and looked up Mr. Snavely. He lived at 1004 Woodlawn Street. Harry noted this down carefully. It was, of course, far too early to tell—these were only the preliminaries.

Harry then showered in the chipped bathtub and went to bed. Before he did so, he sprayed his throat with antiseptic. A man couldn't be too careful with one of his basic assets.

In the morning he took out the city directory again. Commerce Discount House was located on

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Langwell Avenue in a congested semi-industrial area. Good. Woodlawn Street, where Mr. Snavely made his home, was approximately three miles away from Langwell Avenue at its nearest point. Good again.

He breakfasted daintily on Danish and coffee before he caught a Langwell bus, watching street numbers as the bus growled and butted its way through the morning traffic. He got off at a stop a few blocks away from Commerce Discount House and started walking. He couldn't have missed the place. It had a large neon sign that must have cost the interest on many a small loan. A smaller sign, on the stairway between a drug store and a men's haberdashery, added that Commerce Discount House was on the second floor.

Harry inspected the hallway carefully, then walked up the stairs and into the loan office.

The office was split in two by a partition that contained stalls designed to give borrowers privacy. Outside the partition were several benches and a table containing literature about loan plans. He picked up a flyer and pretended to read it while he studied the private side of the office. Three girls were operating typewriters and bookkeeping machines. One male clerk was in head-to-head conversation with a loan applicant in one of the stalls.

Mr. Snavely, recognizable from his picture in the newspaper, sat at a desk near a window. Through this window Harry could see the bulk of a large red-brick office building across Langwell Avenue.

He by no means intended to overstay his welcome. Still carrying the folder and with an air that said, "I'm going to look this over. I'll be back if I like what I read," he drifted out. The folder said that office hours were from nine to five on Mondays. At five he would come back.

He did. Timing it nicely, he came abreast to Commerce Discount just as a gaggle of office girls emerged, followed by Mr. Snavely. Harry, in turn, followed Mr. Snavely and watched him, at a nearby parking lot, get into a dingy-looking coupé.

Harry had not wasted his time between the two trips to Commerce Discount. When he left the office in the morning, he had crossed the street to the red-brick office building he had seen through Mr. Snavely's window. The building superintendent had shown him a small office on the second floor. Harry, looking timid and uncertain, had asked how much it was. "I'm going to start a little magazine subscription business," he had said, and taken out his wallet. "I thought maybe sixty a month—"

From long experience Harry had calculated the actual rental at forty-five dollars, tops. Practically stealing an extra ten or fifteen dollars made most building supers hasty deal-closers, and not apt to ask for

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references or credentials. If the building had been a rooming house, Harry could have saved money. A room, in this type of neighborhood, went for maybe twenty a month. But Harry was philosophical about it, shrugging it off as unavoidable overhead. By afternoon he had arranged for a telephone and had had a second-hand desk and chair sent in. These cost fifty dollars. In none of his transactions did he use his own name.

At seven that evening he picked out a restaurant from the city directory that was not far from the Snavely home on Woodlawn Street and found a bus that would take him there. A taxi would have been more comfortable but taxi drivers had better memories than bus drivers, as Harry well knew. Before he dined, he walked past the Snavely home—a shoebox Cape Cod with a fragment of yard. Mr. Snavely's car was parked in the driveway. This visit was not vital to his plans but Harry the Jackal had a paternal interest in his clients. In the living room he could see the Snavelys, husband and wife, cozily watching TV. A nice couple, probably no children. Harry approved.

His last act that evening was to buy an early edition of the morning paper. He noted with satisfaction that the assailant of the young housewife had not yet been caught. Not that it made too much difference. The crime had already had its psychological effect.

He was on the sidewalk outside the parking lot when Snavely brought his car in the following morning. There was always the chance that Mrs. Snavely might have wanted the car, in which case Harry would have had to postpone things temporarily. He was grateful. Harry didn't like to postpone the business in hand once it was under way.

As soon as Snavely was safely into his office, Harry caught a bus back to Woodlawn Street. He walked up the sidewalk to the Snavely home, taking a magazine subscription pad from his pocket as he rang the bell.

Mrs. Snavely was a dumpy little woman in her late thirties. Harry studied her briefly as she opened the door. A blue dress. Brown hair, done up in curlers.

He said tentatively, letting her see the pad, "Madam, I'm—"

She said, "I'm sorry. I already take—"

He listened while she recited the list of magazines that she already subscribed to. Sometimes he wondered, in a situation like this, just what he would do if a woman did want to take a subscription. When she had finished he turned away, making it easy for her to finish brushing him off.

He made three other calls on the Snavely block—just in case she was watching. Then he hurried back to the office he had rented the previous day. Through the window he

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could see into the office of Commerce Discount House across the street. Snavely was at his desk. Two or three clients were waiting. Not enough. Harry settled back with a magazine to wait until noon when there would undoubtedly be a queue of people waiting to make new loans or to make payments on old ones.

From time to time he glanced over to Snavely, across the street. Nice little guy. Nice little wife. After a time he began rehearsing. Not in The Voice. Just softly under his breath. The words he had been saying for ten years. "Hello, Snavely," he would say. (Or Smith or Jones or whatever.) "Listen to me now. Listen careful. I'm calling from your home. I've got your wife here. She looks nice in her blue dress (or red or brown), doesn't she, Snavely?" Scores of times, making his calls, he had watched shoulders stiffen at this personal touch. "Don't hang up, Snavely. Don't make a move. I've got a man right there in the room with you. Now here's what you'll do, Snavely, if you ever want to see your wife in one piece. Remember what happened to that other dame the day before yesterday. Take three thousand dollars from the safe. Walk slow, move easy. Put the money in an envelope and tell the girl at the switchboard that you'll be right back. You hear me, Snavely? Don't forget, you're being watched." And scores of times Harry had seen his man nod involuntarily at the order. "Now you take the envelope and a piece of scotch tape. You walk down the stairs with it and you stick it behind the radiator at the foot of the stairs when no one is looking." (The fire extinguisher or the trash bin or whatever Harry had decided on during his first inspection trip.) "Easy now, Snavely. Remember, you're being watched." There would always be that frightened look at the harmless people waiting to be served, one of them suddenly taking on the appearance of a vicious criminal. "Now leave the money like I said and then go out the door and keep walking. Get in your car at the parking lot and don't talk to anyone. Drive around for ten minutes and then come on home here. My partner will call me two minutes after you leave the money—call me right here at your house. If he says you behaved yourself, your wife will be all right."

In the early days of his career Harry collected from twenty per cent of his calls. The other eighty per cent of the time, the finance company manager would hang up the phone and quickly call his wife and the police in that order. No harm done. A crank call that was impossible to trace and was soon forgotten.

Then Harry had discovered the master stroke—watching the newspapers until he found a city where a housewife had been the victim of an assault or a murder. Harry deplored

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violence, of course. But he had found that his collections went up to eighty per cent in cities shocked by such a current crime. The psychological effect. The master stroke.

He had not failed, he recollected, in his last seven tries. A perfect score. In half an hour now, he would make the call to Snavely. Harry would watch him leave the office, hide the money, get in his car, and drive off. Then Harry would slip over, pick up the money, and vanish.

If the building superintendent ever wondered what had happened to his tenant and called the police—which was highly doubtful since the super could sell the desk and chair after the month was up and pocket some more graft—the police were not likely to connect the super's story with the extortion across the street. Snavely would rush home to find that his wife had not been intruded on—"No dear. Nobody was here but the mailman and a poor old man selling magazines." Snavely would be reprimanded by his superior, maybe have to pay the money back. In due time the company's headquarters would send a flyer around to all its branches describing Harry's method. This did not bother Harry. He estimated that he could last another three or four years without hitting the same company twice—and by that time the flyers would have been forgotten.

Harry glanced across at Snavely again. He was still at his desk. There were a dozen people waiting now, a couple of them roughly dressed workmen. This was the psychological moment.

He picked up the telephone and dialed a number. When the girl said, "Commerce Discount," he said, "Let me talk to Mr. Snavely."

Only now did he use The Voice—a deep, corrugated basso with a sinister edge. "Snavely," he said, "Listen to me and listen carefully. I'm calling from your home."

Snavely said, "What's that?"

"Shut up and listen. I'm calling from your home. I've got your wife here. She looks nice in her blue dress, Snavely."

As expected, Snavely stiffened. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Don't hang up, Snavely. Don't make a move. I've got a man right there in the room with you." Through the window he saw Snavely look warily at the waiting men.

"Now here's what you'll do, Snavely, if you ever want to see your wife in one piece again. Don't forget what happened to that other dame the other day. If her old man had listened, she'd be alive right now. Take three thousand dollars out of the safe—"

Snavely said, "Three thousand dollars?"

"Three thousand dollars." Harry added just a little more vibrato to his basso.

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"Wait a minute," Snavely said. Harry watched him carefully to make sure he wasn't giving any sort of signal to the office help. He wasn't. Snavely's voice rose a little. "You mean, if I don't take three thousand dollars out of the safe and do whatever it is you want me to do you'll—"

"That's what I said."

Snavely sighed. Very softly he said, "Wonderful. Wonderful."

From across the street, Harry the Jackal could see him lean back in his chair with a gentle smile as he carefully hung up the phone.

Harry the Jackal left New Haven that very night. He was, as previously mentioned, never quite the same man again.

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AUTHOR:	**GEORGE HARMON COXE**
TITLE:	***A Neat and Tidy Job***
TYPE:	Detective-Crime Story
DETECTIVES:	Sergeant Cheney—with help from Mary Heath
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*The pay-roll robbery looked like a tidy job—until an elevator girl with a passion for neatness, and with courage in her convictions, realized her boy friend was in danger . . .*

HER NAME WAS MARY HEATH AND she stood five-foot-three in the medium heels she wore when she was on duty. She weighed one hundred and eight, her hair was shiny black, her eyes were deep blue, and her firmly rounded chin suggested she had been endowed with a full quota of spunk.

Her domain during working hours was the first car in the three-bank elevator system of the Caswell Building; and because she was young—just past nineteen—and friendly, she was a favorite with most of the tenants. They liked her cheerfulness and their kidding was basically well mannered and gentle. The fresh ones saved their more suggestive comments for Ethel and Loretta in the adjoining cars, for though they were not much older than Mary they were married and somewhat more experienced in parrying conversational liberties.

In the months she had been running the first car her passion for neatness had become well-known to the regulars. She could not control the transients but the others avoided spilling ashes on the carpet of her car. If they lit a cigarette they carried the paper match outside before discarding it, and if they forgot and opened a pack in

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her car they remembered not to drop the cellophane top.

This passion for tidiness was simply a facet of her personality, as much a part of her as her honesty and friendliness. She was fastidious about her appearance and somehow looked a little smarter in her gray-blue uniform than Ethel with her full-blown figure or Loretta with her tinted blonde hair. Since Mary always kept her tiny apartment spic and span she saw no reason why this cage, which was actually her business office five days a week, should not be equally neat and tidy. At least, that was how she explained it when Ethel discovered that Mary kept a small whisk broom tucked behind the collapsible seat in her car. If she wanted to stop the empty car between floors on occasion and sweep the carpet, why should anyone object?

Mary's insistence on neatness came up for the umpteenth time at exactly five minutes after three one Friday afternoon in June when Harry Gilmore came into the foyer of the Caswell Building and headed for her empty car. Harry was a maintenance man and had the title of Assistant Engineer. He wore his customary soiled coveralls and had a handful of tools in his left fist, a cigarette in his mouth.

"How about a ride, baby?" he said. "I've got some plumbing to do on the fourth."

Mary cocked one eye at the wall clock and saw that she had four minutes before she had to go up to the eighth floor and pick up Stan Norton; she cocked the other at the half-inch ash that hung from Gilmore's dangling cigarette.

"Sure, Harry," she said. "Just knock that ash off first, please."

Harry grinned. He removed the cigarette, studied it, then flicked off the ash with an elaborate gesture.

"Okay, Grandma," he said, still grinning. "But what are you going to do when you get married? I mean—if your husband smokes? You going to make him give up the filthy weed?"

"Certainly not. He can smoke as much as he wants to."

"Maybe in a corner of the kitchen with his face to the wall?"

Mary found herself smiling back at him. He had that effect on her and she remembered the speculation he had caused in her when he had come to work one morning about six months ago. For Harry was handsome in a black-browed, curly-headed way; he had a brash and conceited manner but he also had a quick and knowing smile, and his glance was bold, his manner assured.

Mary had felt his appeal, but she kept this to herself until, a few days later, he had had some repair work to do on her elevator. When he finished, there were grease stains on her carpet—pieces of dirt and oily lint had dropped down from the open ceiling hatch and been ground under foot. When she saw

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the damage she was too upset to control her indignation. She spoke with such spirit that Harry could only stare at her, then retreat fast. It had taken the cleaning woman two nights to get rid of the stains and Mary had even complained to George Allen, the engineer, who, while sympathizing with her complaint, said that elevators were always greasy and that Harry's problem had not been an easy one.

She had almost forgotten the incident when Harry appeared that afternoon just as she was ready to leave the building. When he apologized for dirtying her car and asked if she would let him take her out to dinner to prove he was forgiven, she had no impulse to refuse.

She had gone out with him three times afterward but had not liked his friends, his attitude, or his tactics in a taxi, and when he saw she meant it the invitations stopped. Even so, their relationship had remained friendly. He still joked with her and she knew that he liked her, but by then Stan Norton had become more attentive and she was glad she had sense enough to encourage him—Stan with his slow smile and serious manner, but with a solid dependability that would be more rewarding in the years to come.

But she could still laugh with Harry and she did so now.

"My husband," she said with amiable dignity, "can smoke wherever and whenever he likes. There will be plenty of ashtrays and I'm sure he will be thoughtful enough to use them."

The buxom Ethel, who had just discharged a load of passengers, had overheard the exchange and quickly took advantage of the opportunity.

"Come on, Harry," she said. "I'll give you a ride. You can put your ashes on my carpet any time . . . Besides," she added, "Mary has to carry the mail in a couple of minutes."

Harry accepted without further hesitation. "Right, baby." He waved his cigarette at Mary and grinned again. "And let that be a lesson to you, Grandma."

Ethel's reference to the mail reminded Mary of her weekly task—a task that always made her a little nervous. She let the door close partway and Cliff Forbes, who was the starter when he was not relieving one of the girls at lunch time or for a coffee break, came over to help her.

For the next minute or so he stood beside her in front of the partly open door and directed the incoming traffic to the other two cars. Then they both watched the plate-glass panel which formed one wall of the lobby and looked directly into the City Bank and Trust Company which had its main entrance on the corner.

This weekly routine on the pay roll for the Tracy Company had

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been worked out over a period of time and was as foolproof as it could be made. At ten every Friday morning Stan Norton came down to the bank with a brown-leather valise to collect the currency which had been put up in the proper denominations. Ed Ewald, the bank guard, took a minute from his regular duties to accompany Stan across the lobby to the elevator where Mary made a nonstop run to the eighth floor. There were only two establishments here, one half the space occupied by the Tracy Construction Company and the other half by a girls' secretarial school. During the day the pay roll would be made up in individual envelopes and then, shortly after the bank closed, the second half of the operation would begin.

At three o'clock Ed Ewald locked the bank doors from the inside and then changed into street clothes. Now, at ten minutes after three, Mary saw him coming toward the desk in the lobby with his hat and coat on. He nodded to her, picked up the telephone, and dialed the number of the Tracy Company to tell them that he would be ready. When he hung up, he gave a small wave of his hand and Cliff Forbes said, "Okay, Mary," and stepped away from the door.

When it clicked into place, the car started up and the nervousness which had been stirring inside her began to assert itself. She was not worried that anything might happen here—there would be no stops for the elevator, either up or down. As for Ed Ewald, he was a retired policeman who added to his regular income by guarding Stan on his weekly trip. When Stan reached the lobby Ed would fall in beside him, one hand on the gun in his pocket. They would take a taxicab for a ten minute ride to the construction project near the river, deliver the valise, and be back in less than a half hour.

Stan had assured her many times that there was nothing to fear, but she could not ignore the possibility that something could go wrong. That was why she dreaded Fridays and why she could never feel relaxed until Stan and Ed Ewald were safely back in the Caswell Building.

Mary's car came to a gentle stop. The door slid back—and then she saw him.

He must have been standing close to the door because he was inside before she could move, and in that first terrifying instant she was so shocked that she only knew that he was a man, that he had an ugly short-barreled revolver in his hand, and that his head was covered with a large, brown-pager bag.

She felt the gun jab into her side as he stood beside her. The two eye-holes that had been cut in the bag only added to the grotesqueness of his appearance. She caught a brief glimpse of the eyes but they were in shadow and had no form,

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color, or shape. The voice that lashed out at her was muffled and distorted.

"Don't move—not a muscle! Make one sound and you're dead."

She could not have moved or cried out had her life depended on it. Her throat was closed, her muscles paralyzed.

"Stick your head out a little," the voice commanded. "Pretend you're watching for him. When you see him, smile."

She did so and now she saw the door down the ball open. Mr. O-'Connor, the Tracy office manager, stepped out, glanced up and down. When he moved aside, Stan Norton passed in front of him and then he was walking toward her, the slow smile beginning to work on his angular face.

The gunman had heard the office door and the approaching steps, and the muzzle of the gun dug harder into her side. This time it hurt, but she did not cry out. She saw Stan's smile expand, heard him say, "Hi, sweetheart. Right on the button."

He started to step into the car before he saw the hooded figure, and then it was too late. After that, things happened so fast and were over so quickly that all her mind could retain were fleeting impressions.

She saw the sudden widening of Stan's startled gaze. She saw the color drain from his stricken face. Then he was inside the car and the valise had been snatched from his nerveless fingers. A hand reached out to spin him about so that he faced the elevator door and the gun was withdrawn from her side and jammed against Stan's spine.

"*Seven!* Get moving!"

Somehow she managed to push the correct button. The door closed and they moved down one flight and stopped again. As the door opened, a hand was planted against Stan's back and he was propelled violently into the corridor. She felt herself being jerked away from the controls. Before she could get her balance, she went spinning through the door, her shoes skidding on the waxed composition floor. By the time she could recover her balance and glance round, the elevator door had closed automatically.

The corridor was suddenly quiet and empty and when she glanced at Stan he was already moving. His face was stony, his jaw tight, and he did not stop to ask if she was all right or if she had been hurt.

"Find a phone!" he said. "Quick. Get the police!"

She understood him but in that first instant, not knowing why he should be running toward the fire door, she started after him. When he hit the heavy steel panel at the end of the corridor she realized that he was going to use the stairs and try to head off the gunman in the lobby. She also realized that

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with his long legs he might be able to do just that. The thought frightened her because she knew the man who had taken the valise still had the gun.

"No, Stan! Please—"

They were on the landing between floors when he wheeled on her and grabbed her shoulders. He shook her once, hard, and there was a desperate look in his eyes.

"The phone!" he said harshly. "Hurry!"

He was on his way down then, taking the steps in great leaps that covered three at a time and now the urgency made itself felt and she began running up the stairs. Then, because it seemed the quickest way, she scrambled out on the eighth floor and ran to the door of the Tracy Company.

She was not sure what she said. It exasperated her that she had to repeat her words to make the startled receptionist understand. Then, as the girl began to dial, the door opened at one side and Mr. O'Connor stepped from his office. She turned on him, the words tumbling out, and when Mr. O'Connor understood he wasted no time. He snapped a question at the operator to make sure she had the police on the line, then he took Mary by the arm and hurried her into the hall.

The next few minutes were a hectic period of frustration and confusion for Mary Heath. The first thing she saw when they stepped out on the lobby floor was Stan talking excitedly to Ed Ewald, and an odd sense of relief flowed through her when she realized that he was all right. She noticed next that the door of her elevator was closed and as she glanced at the signal panel on the wall, the light in the first column told her that the car had been stopped at the second floor. She heard Mr. O'Connor tell Ewald to check anyone leaving the building until the police arrived and then he ran into the second car, followed by Stan.

No one asked Mary to go with them, but she did anyway. Ethel, who had been watching mutely, had sense enough not to ask questions and Mr. O'Connor spoke only once.

"Did you bring anyone down from the second floor in the last couple of minutes?"

"No, sir."

When they found Mary's car empty, Stan wheeled and ran toward the fire door. Mr. O'Connor yelled to ask where he was going, and Stan called back over his shoulder.

"The basement. If he didn't come into the lobby he could have gone all the way down."

Mr. O'Connor blew out his breath. He looked at Mary.

"I guess here's nothing more we can do here," he said. "Might as well go back to my office and wait for the police."

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Sergeant Cheney, who arrived three or four minutes after the two uniformed men from the radio squad car, took charge of the investigation. He spent most of his time in Mr. O'Connor's office, talking to people and getting reports from the detectives who were doing the legwork. He was still in the office two hours later, and so was Mary.

She was the only one who had not left the room at one time or another, and nothing happened that in any way had changed her first impression of the sergeant—an impression that left her uncomfortable and afraid. In his forties, she thought, with a suggestion of gray in his brown hair, and an impassive, squarish face that never smiled. His voice was level and unaccented but it carried a hint of suspicion, and the shrewd gray eyes seemed not only to take in each physical detail of her appearance, but assess her thoughts as well.

She could not tell whether he believed her story or not, and there was no sign that he recognized Stan Norton until all the details had been brought to light. What he said then filled Mary with a dread she had been unable to shake. She could still see the way he had looked at Stan, could hear the disconcerting effect of his words.

"I know you, don't I, Norton?"

"I guess you do," Stan had said. "The Lollar job, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sort of looks like history repeating itself."

Mr. O'Connor, who had been listening with a mystified air, asked what the Lollar job was and the sergeant told him. Then, with an odd sense of despair growing in her, Mary was listening to the story of another successful pay-roll robbery that had happened to Stan and an armed guard three years ago when he was working for another company. The fact that eventually he had been completely exonerated did not seem now to excuse his silence about the previous holdup. Mr. O'Connor said so and Stan replied that he had not thought it important.

"When I came to work for you, sir, I didn't have anything to do with the pay roll."

"But later, when we decided to give you this assignment—"

"I know, sir," Stan said lamely. "I just didn't think such a thing could happen to me twice."

Mr. O'Connor had made no further comment. He had waited while Cheney questioned Ed Ewald, and George Allen, the engineer, and Harry Gilmore. He had listened to reports from the detectives who were searching the building and had been assured that everyone who had left directly after the holdup had been given a quick but thorough inspection. When it was all over Cheney voiced an opinion. He said that in

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his business he had come to the conclusion that the obvious solution to any crime was usually the correct one.

"What did you do with the valise, Norton? Who is in this thing with you?"

Stan protested, and so did Mary. They had told the truth. It happened exactly as they said it had and both mentioned that Stan had been empty-handed when he came out of the fire door on the lobby floor; Ed Ewald and Cliff Forbes, the starter, could also testify to that.

"Sure," Cheney had said. "But there was a window open on the second floor landing of those fire stairs. All you had to do," he added to Stan, "was toss the bag out that window on your way down. There's a paved court out there. You can get into it, or out of it, from the back door of the Taylor Building on the next street. A guy waiting down there at the right time could pick up the bag, go through the Taylor Building, and be home free."

Mary had waited for Stan to protest again. She had expected a vehement and indignant denial; instead there was only a hopeless shake of Stan's head and a barely audible word that sounded like, "No." This attitude dismayed her but it did not prevent her from turning on Cheney, and she spoke out in her anger, her blue eyes flashing.

She admitted that whoever took the money had to time the operation precisely and be familiar with every detail of the routine. But what about some of the others? What about George Allen, the engineer, who said he was in the basement all that time, but could not prove it? What about Harry Gilmore? He was supposed to be fixing some plumbing on the fourth floor, but was he?

Cheney heard her out and was ready with answers. True, George Allen had been alone in the basement workshop but there was no money there, nor any sign of the valise—so what had happened to it? As for Harry Gilmore, he had been seen working in the fourth floor Men's Room by a clerk employed on that floor.

"The guy couldn't pinpoint the time," Cheney said, "but he'll swear that it was between ten and fifteen minutes after three."

Now with the office quiet and everyone gone except Cheney and his men, the sergeant sat in Mr. O'Connor's desk chair, a dead pipe in his mouth. Mary could tell that the inquisition was about over as she saw him turn to Stan.

"All right, Stanley," he said. "It's time you took a ride down to the precinct house and did some talking."

Mary, watching Stan's bony shoulders move in a faint shrug, sensed that he was deliberately avoiding her glance.

"That's all I've been doing."

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"You'll talk some more. The Lieutenant will want to hear your story. He'll have some more questions. So will I. Maybe an assistant district attorney will want to get into the act. I don't know how long it will take—maybe all night. But we've got plenty of time."

Cheney stood up and sighed. "I understand you and Mary want to get married."

Stan nodded.

"You made a nice score this afternoon—nearly ten thousand bucks."

"I've told you," Stan cut in, anger finally showing in his voice.

"I know," Cheney interrupted. "But if you did I promise you'll never enjoy it. We're going to be watching you from now on. You're going to have to account for everything you spend and we'll know about every move you make. It won't be any fun—in fact, it'll be a lousy way to start a marriage . . . Let's go."

He walked to the door with Stan and spoke to one of his men; then he came back, the pipe still in his mouth, and looked at Mary.

"We'll need a statement from you too, but it can wait until morning."

"I told you the truth," Mary said woodenly.

"I'm beginning to believe you."

She wasn't sure she understood him and the faintest of hopes began to stir inside her.

"But if you believe me, you have to believe Stan."

Cheney shook his head.

"So far as *you* know, this thing happened just as you said. But there's another way you haven't thought about. Look." He leaned forward and pointed the pipestem. "Suppose a guy you never heard about—a guy who's been coached on the timing and all the details—walked in downstairs a little after three with a gun in his pocket and a folded paper bag under his coat."

He paused and put the pipe back between his teeth. "The job happens the way you said. You and Stanley get pushed off on the seventh floor. Stanley runs. You run for the telephone. This guy with the bundle rides down to the second, beats it to the fire stairs, and drops the bag out the window. He climbs up a floor or two and rides down again when he can. Who's to stop him? His hands are clean; he's got no package; he gets past the bank guard and the starter even though they search him. He goes around the block, through the Taylor Building, and—"

Mary interrupted him. She didn't like the direction Cheney's reconstruction was taking. "But how could anyone do that without Stan's help?"

"That's what I mean," Cheney said.

He did not finish. He did not have to. The meaning was perfectly clear and as they left the office and went into the hall to wait

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for the elevator, the thought kept penetrating Mary's consciousness with a terrible persistence. She kept thinking about that earlier robbery, and each time she thrust the thought aside by telling herself that Stan could not have planned such a thing—not the Stan she knew and loved. The sergeant *must* be wrong . . .

The elevator door slid back and when Mary stepped inside and saw the dark smudges on the carpet it was all she could do to keep from bursting into tears. Why, she asked herself, was it always like this whenever she left her car for any length of time? No one seemed to care whether it was clean and tidy and now, with the strain of the past hours working on her, she had to blink back her tears. She kept her face averted until they reached the lobby.

"I have to go back to the second floor," she said; then aware that Cheney did not understand, she added, "To the restroom to change my clothes."

The door closed again and she could not keep her eyes from the floor. The dark spots and smudges looked greasy and she wondered if the cleaning woman would be able to remove them during the night. Only once before had the carpet been so soiled and that time—

She knelt quickly as this new thought overwhelmed her. A touch of her finger told her that the smudges *were* oily, and suddenly her heart gave a little flip and she could feel an odd tension working on the emptiness inside her chest.

Something made her turn and look at a panel in the metal wall of the car. There was an almost invisible door here, its presence indicated by hairline cracks and a tiny keyhole. Its purpose was a means of escape in case the car got caught between floors. When that happened, the adjoining car could move up to the same height and, with both emergency doors open, passengers could move safely from one car to the other. There was still another way out of this car and as her glance moved to the ceiling she felt the tension grow and a new excitement plucked at her nerves.

Unaware that the car had stopped and remembering only the other time when the ceiling hatch was open and the oily pieces of dirt and lint had fallen to the floor, she reached for the round collapsible seat.

When she pulled it down from the side of the car her little whisk broom fell to the floor but this time she did not notice it. Pulling her skirts up, she got one foot on the seat and then the other, straightened up, and placed one hand flat against the metal side panel so that she could keep her balance. A flick of her finger and the little catch on the escape hatch in the ceiling

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clicked back and she pushed it open; then she was groping above the hatch, her probing fingers sliding over greasy metal surfaces, finally coming to an object which was definitely not metal.

She stood on tiptoe, feeling the strap of her brassiere snap as she strained to get better leverage. Her fingernails helped to draw the object a little closer and then she was pulling it, seeing the edge of the valise now in the opening and pulling still harder until it came too far, slipped from her grasp, and thumped solidly onto the carpet below.

She stepped down carefully and let the seat snap back against the elevator wall. She was still staring at the grease-stained valise when she heard a slight sound behind her. Then, as her muscles froze and she tried to turn, she heard the familiar voice.

"Well, well. So you and old Stan lifted the pay roll after all?"

Harry Gilmore stood in the doorway, an odd grin on his handsome face. He looked very sharp in his blue suit with a trench coat thrown over one arm. There was also a narrowed brightness in his gaze.

"We had nothing to do with it," Mary snapped.

"Then how did you know the bag was up there?"

"I didn't." She pointed at the soiled rug. "But I remembered the last time this car was all messed up with grease and dirt was when you were up there working on the machinery with that hatch open. It gave me an idea. I don't know how you did it, Harry—that's for the police to find out—"

She stopped at a movement of his hands and then she was looking at the same revolver she had seen earlier in the afternoon. Before she could fully understand what it meant, Harry had stepped past her and tipped the hatch back into place. He picked up the valise and gestured with the gun.

"Let's go, baby."

"Go? Where?"

"To the girl's room. I'll need a little time to figure things out."

He pulled her into the hall and they walked down the corridor, turned left, and finally came to a door near the end. Mary took the key from her pocket and when the lock clicked they moved into this room which had metal lockers along one wall, a couch, three wicker chairs, a round table, and an electric grill for making coffee.

"Go ahead," Harry said. "Get on with your change."

She saw he meant it. When she realized she had no choice, she stepped over to her locker and worked the combination. She took out her gray dress and cloth coat and put them on the couch. She placed her handbag beside them. She took off her uniform jacket and tossed it aside; then, turning her back to him, she removed her

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blouse, gave a tug at the zipper on her skirt, and stepped out of it. For a moment only she stood in her slip but there was no room in her mind for embarrassment as she quickly pulled the dress down over her head. She wasted no time on speculation as to what might happen now, but her mind was working and she had to know how Harry had done so much alone.

"After you put Stan and me out on the seventh," she said, "you rode to the second. That gave you time enough to hide the pay roll. You went to the fire stairs and made sure they were empty—Stan was probably all the way down to the first floor—and then you went back up to the fourth. When did you change your clothes?"

"There's a vacant office next to the men's john on the fourth floor. I had an old suit on under my coveralls when Ethel took me up. All I had to do in the vacant office was take off the coveralls and leave my tools."

"But that clerk who said he saw you in the Men's Room—"

"That was a break I hadn't counted on," Harry said. "Nobody saw me get out on the second floor or go in or out of that vacant office on the fourth. The Men's Room was empty and I tore up the paper bag and flushed it down the toilet. I was still working on that when this character comes in."

"And tonight you were waiting for me to leave the elevator—"

"That's right, baby, and if you hadn't been so nosey it would have been a cinch." He swore softly. "You can't open that damn hatch without some of that oily junk falling into the car, but you were the only one who noticed it."

"But all those pay envelopes?"

"That's why I brought this trench coat. It's got two pockets in it big enough to hold a crate of oranges. Now you can give me a hand."

When she turned she saw that he was inspecting her handbag. It was a large one because she carried her lunch in it every day. Harry had opened the valise and was now tucking some of the pay envelopes inside her bag. The others he distributed in the two pockets of his trenchcoat. Then, as she hung up her uniform in the locker, he stepped past her and put the valise at the bottom of her locker.

"That's a good place for it," he said. "When the cops find that tomorrow it should make it even tougher for your boy friend."

"How will it?" Mary said. "I'll simply tell them the truth."

"You'll tell them nothing, baby. I've got other plans for you." He waved the gun. "Right now we're going out together. The night watchman might be down in the lobby and there could be a cop with him, but they're not going to stop us, understand? Because I'm already a two-time looser in Pennsylvania and I've gone too far with

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this to chicken out now. If I have to use the gun I'll do it, and if I do you're going to get it first. Understand?"

Mary was surprised to find the elevator still there until she realized that they had been gone only a few minutes. Harry Gilmore had draped the trench coat containing most of the pay envelopes over his left arm to hide the gun he was holding. He gave her a final word of caution as the car started down, but it was a phrase he had used earlier that stuck in her mind. She did not know what he meant by having plans for her, but she did understand one thing clearly: if anything did happen to her or if she did not come back, the police would find the valise in her locker and Stan would not only go to prison, he would have on his record another black mark that would remain there as long as he lived.

As they stepped from the car she saw Sergeant Cheney standing by the cigar counter talking to the night watchman and she realized this might be her one and only chance—and her last chance. But she believed what Harry Gilmore had threatened: she knew he would use the gun if he had to. She dared not make a precipitous move, but she was able surreptitiously to twist the catch on her handbag so that it snapped open.

It was the kind of bag which had two straps and when properly held they served to keep the top of it closed. Now, with the catch open, she could only hope that Cheney might catch a glimpse of what was inside. And so she moved up, her young face frozen in a half smile and all too conscious of Harry Gilmore's nearness. As they approached the cigar counter, both Cheney and Charlie Doyle, the night watchman, straightened up from the glass case.

"I thought I might give you a ride home," Cheney said.

"No, thanks, Sergeant," Mary said through stiff lips. "Harry's taking me."

"Yeah," Gilmore said. "It's no trouble."

She came to a stop as they spoke, her handbag turned toward Cheney. When nothing happened, she felt the pressure of Gilmore's arm and trench coat against her back and she started to walk again when she saw something happen to Cheney's eyes. For an instant they flicked to the handbag and seemed to fasten there. When he said, "Just a second, Mary," she made her move.

Having started to step toward the door she spun on her right foot and her arm whipped around, the bag at the end of it. She was aiming at the hand with the gun, feeling a sudden terror as she waited for a shot and finally understanding that the suddenness of her attack had startled Harry into a precious moment of inaction.

Then the bag slammed into the

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hidden hand and one strap broke. She heard the muffled shot that followed and saw the small pay envelopes begin to spill onto the floor. She knew she had not been hit, but when her momentum carried her against Harry he pushed her violently and she fell. She struck the marble floor on both knees, felt pain, then heard the second shot.

By the time she could get her head up and bring the scene into focus, Harry was on the floor and Cheney and the night watchman were on top of him. Suddenly Cheney had the short-barreled revolver in his hand and Charlie Doyle was jerking Harry to his feet.

Cheney was still too startled to do more than stare at her as she squirmed into a sitting position and pulled her skirt down. She was not really angry with the sergeant but reaction hit her hard and one knee was throbbing painfully. As though in protest against the hours of injustice, she spoke sharply and the words came out high-pitched.

"Now maybe you'll get it through that thick head of yours that Stan had nothing to do with the pay-roll robbery."

She was ashamed as soon as she said the words. Cheney came over to help her to her feet and ask her if she was all right and then she was telling him what had happened in the elevator and what she knew. It did not take long and Cheney needed no diagram. He had handcuffs on Harry Gilmore and all the pay envelopes were quickly collected and Charlie Doyle was using the telephone.

"I'm going to take this lad with me," Cheney said to her, "but there'll be a car along in a minute for you. You've had a rough day and I think you'll want to go home and maybe put some hot compresses on that knee of yours."

"And where are you taking Harry?" Mary demanded.

"To the precinct house."

"Is that where Stan is?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm going with you. If anybody's going to take me home tonight it's going to be Stan."

"All right, all right," Cheney said, and for the first time he smiled at her. It was a nice smile, genuine and sympathetic, and it changed his whole face. It seemed to Mary that for the first time he really approved of her and, thus comforted, she hitched her coat into place and patted the back of her hair. When she was ready she spoke to Charlie Doyle.

"Will you do something for me, Charlie?"

"Sure, Mary."

"Then *please* tell the cleaning woman to see if she can get those grease spots out of the carpet in my car. Right now it's a mess and I'd like it looking halfway decent in the morning when I come in."

Then, reassured by Charlie's promise, she was ready to ride with Cheney . . . to Stan.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**LESLIE WALLER**
TITLE:	***The Restless Ones***
TYPE:	Crime Story
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*An important story that should be read by every teenager, every officer of the law, every social worker, every judge—and especially by every father and mother of a teenage child . . .*

THEY WOULDN'T ELECTROCUTE somebody my age, Jerry thought. I'm still a minor—or am I?

He lay flat on his back, staring at the dark bedroom ceiling and waiting. Outside, the gray sky had darkened into black although it was only seven in the evening. Jerry could hear faint noises from the dining room downstairs: the click of cup against saucer, his brother Buzzy's crazy birdlike laugh, the boom of his father's voice.

In a moment he heard Buzzy's laugh again, joined this time by his sister Emily's pleasant, ladylike tinkle. What're they laughing at? Jerry wondered nervously. What's the joke? Me, probably. Some big old joke. You could die laughing.

He grimaced and turned on his side, looking at the faint line of light under his closed door. You got the electric chair, he decided, for first-degree murder. But what was it for second-degree? Or for manslaughter? A life sentence, probably.

He sighed heavily and felt suddenly, strangely, at peace with himself. "We find the defendant guilty as charged," the jury foreman said.

The judge's gavel knocked twice. "I sentence you to life imprisonment and may God have mercy on your—"

No, that was for a death sentence.

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I won't get that, Jerry told himself now. I'll get stuck away in prison somewhere. It won't be so bad. Three crumby old meals a day and I'll work in the machine shop —model prisoner, with time off for good behavior. "In view of your excellent record, it is the decision of this board that you be released from prison to—"

Oh, no. Suddenly Jerry sat up on the edge of the bed. Not that, he thought. Just leave me alone. The food's no good, but at least you know where you are. At least you know what's going to happen tomorrow and next week and next year. In prison nothing's mixed up; everything's sure. That's good enough for me.

He got up off the bed and switched on the lamp over his desk. The sudden glow made his eyes hurt for a moment as he looked aimlessly at the litter there. Comic books, old ones, half covered the abandoned automobile magneto he and Cory had found in the city dump.

When was that, Jerry wondered —last week? Yesterday? Nothing he had done before this evening, before an hour ago, seemed real. It all belonged to a sad and nervous dream life that had happened before tonight, before he and Cory had opened the door to old Devlin's cigar store. But what had happened after that was too real.

Buzzy's staccato laugh echoed in Jerry's ears and he blinked as if slapped. What were they laughing about?

He picked up the magneto and remembered that Cory and he had planned to take out the permanent magnets in it. You could have a lot of fun with magnets. Almost sadly he laid the magneto back on the desk. That's all over, he decided, all done with. He leafed idly through one of the comic books: *Rats of the Underworld*.

He sighed and sat down on the edge of his bed, trying to get interested in the first story. Slowly, he ran his fingers through his crew-cut hair, back and forth, back and forth. After a moment he let the comic book fall to the floor and was lying on his back again, staring at the blank ceiling, warily, tensely, waiting again.

Downstairs, Buzzy laughed much louder and Jerry's mother's voice sounded sharp. "Stop that," she said. "Jerry's not feeling well."

Oh, brother, Jerry thought, you can say that again. He heard himself sigh again, heavily, as though his lungs couldn't get enough oxygen out of the air he breathed. He closed his eyes and wondered how long it would be before they came and got him.

It was funny: he couldn't remember a day when he hadn't felt like this——tensed-up, expectant, jumpy, never sure what would happen next. Well, this was the last of those days, he thought. After this there'd be no more waiting; after this, jail.

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How fast everything happened. They had been in old Devlin's cigar store not more than a minute, maybe less, and in that minute the whole world had died and been born again, differently. What, Jerry asked himself, if I hadn't met Cory and Harold this afternoon? What if we hadn't taken that ride? What if pigs had wings?

The funny part was that none of them had seen it coming. In the movies and the comic books there was always some guy who could see it coming: "I tell you, Ed, if you pull a caper like this you'll swing for it." But that wasn't how it happened in real life, was it?

He suddenly felt a little chilly in his white T-shirt and jeans, but he couldn't seem to muster the strength to get up and put on his jacket or close the window. He felt as if he were lying at the bottom of the ocean, gasping, held down by tons of inky water.

Easy, he told himself. It'll all be over in a little while. They'll come for you. Then the trial, the sentence, and jail—and you can start breathing again.

He closed his eyes, trying to see himself at peace, finally, in prison. Instead he saw himself, with painful clarity, going into the drug store this afternoon and heading for the booth where Cory and Harold sat.

"Arise varlet!" Cory told Harold. "A noble knight approacheth."

They got up and salaamed vigorously three times, Harold upsetting his glass of water. Jerry put on a dead-pan expression, the bored aristocrat. "Be cool, men," he said. "I'm a pretty democratic sort of guy. Just call me Bill."

"Hiya, Bill," Cory said, equally dead-pan. "Seen anything of Jerry?"

"That square," Jerry said, "was last seen astride a winded pinto, making tracks for the pass." He sat down beside Harold, who was mopping up spilled water with a paper napkin.

With a flourish Cory handed Jerry a bowl of sugar cubes. "Be my guest," he said pleasantly.

"Listen, Jerry," Harold said, "what'd you get in the geometry quiz?"

"Ninety-one."

Harold looked disheartened. "Seventy-seven for me."

"You crumbs ordered yet?" Jerry asked.

Cory shook his head and said, "We were waiting for you." He handed Jerry the menu. "What strikes your fancy, old man?"

Jerry frowned. "They do a quite decent black-and-white soda here," he said. "Domestic, of course, but of a good vintage year."

"The steward informed me," Cory confided, "that they've—"

"All right," the waitress cut in, "what'll it be?"

Jerry looked straight ahead. "Three black-and-white sodas, madam," he said in a prim voice.

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When she had left, the boys burst into laughter.

Harold unfolded another paper napkin and carefully sponged off the last drops of water. "What's with you?" Jerry asked.

"Just neat."

Jerry looked incredulously at Cory. "Are you this guy's keeper, Mac?"

"If you want to know," Harold said then, carefully stuffing the damp napkin in Jerry's pocket, "I'm getting in practice for swabbing barracks floors."

"Huh?" Jerry pulled out the napkin and solicitously placed it in Harold's pocket.

"I got my draft call," Harold said flatly. In the silence that followed, he took the napkin out of his pocket and let it fall to the floor.

None of them said anything. When the waitress brought their sodas they picked up their spoons and began eating slowly. Jerry watched the brown-colored liquid rise slowly in his straw, hover for a moment as he held his breath, and then drop back down into the glass as he took his mouth away.

Well, he thought, well. He hadn't known Harold as long as he'd known Cory, of course. But still and all—and Harold was only a few months older than they were. That meant—

He shifted restlessly and began sucking up the soda. Then with his spoon he attacked the ice cream almost savagely. In a few moments the glass was empty. It's like I never had any soda at all, Jerry thought, like she brought me an empty glass.

He pushed the glass away with an irritable gesture. He had the feeling that he ought to be on the move, that he was wasting his time waiting here looking at an empty glass. A lot was happening in the world and he was missing it. Something had to be happening somewhere, because nothing at all was happening here—just the same old waiting.

"Awful dead joint," Cory said abruptly. "Let's blow."

"Yeah," Harold agreed. "Let's hit the road."

"Yeah," Jerry heard himself add, almost mechanically, "let's make with the heel and toe."

Outside, the winter sun was bright. The three of them stood for a moment, trying to decide where to go. Jerry looked in the plate-glass window of old man Devlin's cigar store and saw three versions of himself standing there in jackets and narrow-hipped jeans. The triple illusion was almost perfect, he noticed, except that Cory's jacket was blue, his own was red, and Harold wore an old faded-green Army field jacket of his brother's.

Getting in training, Jerry thought. Man, it gave you the jumps: Harold now, me and Cory next. But how soon? And where to? Doing what?

"Awright, you guys," Cory

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growled in his Humphrey Bogart voice, "let's get a move on. Let's have a little action, see?"

"Yeah," Jerry said, grateful for the interruption. "A little action." He thought for a moment. "Let's go up to my joint and take the magnets out of that old—"

Harold made a face. "That's action?" he said.

They stood there, unable to make up their minds, and again Jerry felt the same overpowering desire to be on the move. "Where's your heap, Cory?"

"My what?" Cory asked in an offended voice. "Are you referring to my internal-combustion machine?"

"Let's ride out to the crossroads," Harold suggested.

"Nothing doing there."

"How do you know?" Harold insisted. "Anyway, what's doing here?"

They got the hot rod out of Cory's father's garage, moving stealthily because they had been forbidden to use the car for a month. Cory's father had made that clear after last Saturday night, Jerry recalled, when the right-rear wheel had spun off the axle as they were coming back from the Soph Hop with their dates. "It's only the cotter pin, Pop," Cory had pleaded. "No," his father had said grimly, "it's the nut that holds the wheel."

Jerry made a pained face as he remembered the corny joke. They pushed the car out of the garage and around the corner onto Walnut Street, where there was a slight downgrade.

Climbing in, they let the car coast for two more blocks until they were out of earshot of Cory's house. Then Cory turned the switch, shifted into high, and let the clutch out. The car bucked violently as the motor caught.

"Awright, you guys," Cory said, reverting to the Humphrey Bogart voice, "a clean getaway, see?" He glanced behind him. "Hey, Lefty," he barked, "is that black sedan follering us?"

"Cripes, boss," Jerry said, making his voice quaver with fright, "it's the johns."

"Hey!" Harold cried, "you nearly hit that dog."

"Whut dawg, pahdnuh?" Jerry asked. "That thar li'l ole varmint ovuh yonduh theah, pahdnuh?"

Cory stared suspiciously at him. "Ain't you the new schoolmarm?" he drawled.

"Smile when you say that, stranguh."

"This town," Cory announced in a tight voice, "ain't big enough for both of us—effen y'know whut I mean."

"Boy," Harold said thoughtfully, "you ain't kidding. This town—"

A kind of pall seemed to settle over them then. Jerry felt his shoulders squeezed between Cory's on the left and Harold's on the right. It gave him a peculiarly constricted

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feeling, as if he were in a trap of some kind, or as if he were trying to push through a doorway that was always too narrow for him. It was a familiar feeling. I ought to be used to it by now, he thought.

The car shuddered wildly as it tore along the road. Harold's body stiffened. "Whatsamatta, solja?" Jerry asked in a gruff top-sergeant's voice. "No guts?"

"Don't chicken out, Joe," Cory said grimly. "This is the big push. At zero-zero-zero-two we move up behind a mortar barrage."

"Yeah," Harold said nervously, trying to grin. "Okay, Sarge, okay."

"Get in there, Joe," Cory ordered. "Give it all y'got, boy. This one's for ice-cream sodas," he added, "and the Sunday funnies and a refrigerator in every pot, boy."

The old car trembled as it roared along the highway. But after a few moments Jerry felt the sudden burst of excitement dwindle inside him. "Where are we going?" he asked them.

"The crossroads."

"What for?"

"I don't know," Cory said. "It's Harold's crumby old idea."

"What for, Harold? What's happening there?"

Harold shrugged. "How should I know?" he said.

"What's happening anywhere?" Jerry asked suddenly, his voice high.

"Okay," Harold asked somberly. "What?"

"Nothing!" Jerry cried. "Nothing but sitting around waiting."

"I'm not waiting any more," Harold reminded him.

"I'll tell you what's happening," Cory said. "We're running out of gas, that's what's happening."

Without warning he stamped on the brake and sent the three of them banging against the windshield as he turned the car on the road and stopped it beside a filling-station pump. An attendant came out of the shack and eyed them sourly.

"Fill 'er up, my good man," Cory said airily. "Your finest imported petrol."

"You got any money?" the attendant asked.

The three of them reached into their pockets and pooled the last of their odd change. "We have," Cory said. "Old man, give us ninety-five cents' worth of gasoline. There's a good fellow."

Waiting now while the gasoline pump whirred, Jerry began to feel restless again, hemmed in. The front seat of the car was cramped and, he knew from experience, the milk crate that served as a back seat was uncomfortable. It didn't make any difference, he decided. They weren't going anywhere anyway.

He shoved himself up onto the back of the seat and eased himself over until he was sitting on the crate in back. "Keep y'motor running, Lefty," he told Cory.

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"Yeah," Cory growled. "Now, listen here, you guys. What I say goes, see?" He turned to the waiting attendant and dropped the money, coin by coin, into his hand. Then he gunned the engine until its roar was deafening. "So long, sucker!" he yelled, turning back onto the highway. The three of them laughed uproariously.

"You're headed back to town," Harold said.

"Maybe I am and maybe I ain't, see?" Cory said. "What's it to yuh?"

"We sure knocked over that filling station neat, boss," Jerry said.

"A clean caper," Cory agreed. "You guys stick with me, see."

"You know something," Harold said, "we *could* have, as easy as not."

"Sure," Jerry agreed. "Lonely road, three guys to one. A cinch."

"Happens all the time," Cory said. "What does it take?"

Harold began to tap his fingers on the outside of the door nearest him, beating out a peculiar tattoo. "The main job," he said, "is planning. There was this story I read once where they had one of the guys phone the store so the owner'd be in back. Then the other guys moved in and cleaned out the till."

"What does it take?" Cory repeated his question. "Any square could do it."

"Squares," Jerry said scornfully, "wouldn't think of doing it."

"That's true." Cory began to toot his horn in time with Harold's drumming tattoo, catching the offbeats.

Jerry was watching Harold's shoulders jerk forward and back, his head nodding to the rhythm. Jerry started to slap the flat of his hand on the milk crate under him. "Yeah," he said, "yeah, yeah. Go. Go, go."

"Going to the Army," Cory chanted, "going to the Army now. Yes, yes, I'm going to the Army, going to the Army now."

"Wow!" Jerry shouted. "I'm going in the Army, going in the Army, I said." Harold, his lips pursed, was imitating a trumpet. "Man. I'm going in the Army, going in the Army, I said. Yes, I'm going in the Army and I hope they kill me dead."

"Hey!" Cory yelled. "Cool, man, cool."

They were driving fast down a tree-lined street on the outskirts of town. It was getting dark; Jerry saw that people were turning their porch lights on.

He felt the crazy jive words die in his throat, and his hand stopped drumming on the rough wood of the milk crate. He heard Harold's trumpet fade slowly away. Only Cory went on, beeping the horn erratically as he swung down a side street, turned another corner, and brought the car to a screeching stop beside a flashing traffic light.

"Where to?" he asked then

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For a moment nobody answered. Jerry shifted nervously on his crate. "Man, this is the deadest town in all the forty-eight," he said finally.

"And Hawaii," Cory reminded him.

"And Alaska," Harold added.

"Somewhere," Jerry said, "somehow, somebody is doing something. Something's happening. I know it is—it's got to be. We aren't the last people left on earth, are we?"

"I'm afraid so," Cory said in a deep voice. "After the plutonium reactor bypassed the fortistan, we reached a critical mass and imploded the transverse foithboinder. The rest was history, and I alone lived to tell the tale. My name is—" He stopped short and clutched his heart. "Agh! My heart! It's turning into platinum-iridium."

"I thought we were going to the crossroads," Harold persisted.

"Be cool," Jerry told him. "This man is dying."

"I'm sinking fast," Cory gasped. "Tell Little Nell the deed to the ranch is hidden in the—"

"Are we going to sit here all night?" Harold demanded. "Let's *do* something."

"Yeah," Cory agreed, suddenly sitting up straight. "Let's hold up old man Devlin."

"Right," Jerry snapped. "Lefty," he said to Harold, "you call him up, see? Whilst he's on the phone, Slats and me will rifle the till. The rest is history."

"Listen," Harold said heavily, "I'm tired of chewing the rag. I'm due for my physical Monday. In the meantime I'd like a little action."

The three of them were silent for a moment. Then Cory sighed. "You talk like you were the only guy in the world getting drafted," he said.

It didn't seem real, any of it, until they dropped Harold around the corner from the drug store. Lying on his back now, staring at the ceiling, Jerry realized that it had still been a big joke up to that point.

They'd parked the car, with the motor running, two doors down from Devlin's. When they saw Harold go into the drug-store telephone booth, they stood just out of old man Devlin's sight. He sat behind the cash register, puffing on that crumbly old pipe of his, looking at nothing, the way he'd done ever since they could remember.

Then they heard the telephone ring. Old man Devlin grunted as he got to his feet and padded slowly back into the rear of the store.

Cory opened the door and the two of them slipped inside. They got behind the counter, both of them, and pressed the No Sale key, wincing at the bell's chime as the cash drawer sprang open. In the back room they could hear the old man talking on the telephone: ". . . no, we ain't got none, son. We don't even carry that brand."

Cory scooped out the money. He

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swept the bills into his hand and then started to grab out the half dollars and quarters, his fingers trembling.

". . . matter of fact, I never heard of it," old man Devlin was saying. "You sure there's a brand like that?"

"Hurry up!" Jerry whispered. "He's getting suspicious of Harold."

". . . must be a joke," Devlin said irritably. "Stop wasting my time." He hung up.

Lying on the bed in his room now, Jerry felt perspiration start out all over him as he remembered that terrible moment when old man Devlin had hung up the telephone. His footsteps had sounded like those of a giant.

They had the cash in their hands when Devlin saw them. "Hey!" he'd cried.

Damp with fear now, Jerry twisted sideways on his bed, seeing again the look of horrified surprise on old man Devlin's grayish face. Devlin had caught Jerry's sleeve, and pulled, then grasped both his arms. Jerry had yanked away, but he was unable to free himself.

They had gone down with a hard thud, rolling over each other. Suddenly old man Devlin's grasp had loosened, and Jerry had scrambled to his feet, shocked.

Old man Devlin lay on the floor, clutching his chest, his eyes rolling back into his head. Then he was still.

"He's dead!" Cory screamed.

Faster than either of them could think, the coins and bills spilled out onto the floor. A half dollar rolled up against the old man's face.

They were running. The car was moving. Harold jumped in. Cory gunned the car down the street, around a corner, down another street and finally, slowly, to the top of Walnut Street.

They cut off the engine and coasted down the hill until, braking slightly, Cory steered the car silently into the garage. They got out of the car without speaking and went home.

The family had been waiting dinner, but Jerry had pretended to be sick. Pretended, he thought—that's a laugh.

He sat on the edge of his bed and stared somberly at the magneto on his desk. At that moment, outside the house, he heard a car pull up and a door slam. There were heavy footsteps along the walk, then dull hollow ones across the porch.

The front doorbell rang.

Jerry felt his muscles tense. His heart was pounding. He heard his father's voice and then another man's, but he couldn't distinguish the words until his father, vaguely angry, said, "He's my son, why?"

The tight, breathless feeling in Jerry's throat began to ease up. The waiting's over, he thought. The rest is simple. It happens every day—trial, sentence, jail. From here on

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in, everything is by the book. Everything laid out cold and sure the rest of my life.

Downstairs there was silence. Then Jerry heard his mother's voice. "No," she said. Just the one word, like a moan.

He could hear footsteps on the stairs. Hurry it up, he begged silently. Another day of this waiting and I'll blow my cork.

His bedroom door opened and he saw his father standing there, a peculiar frown on his face, as though he had just seen something happen that couldn't happen. Tough on him, Jerry realized suddenly. Tough on Mom. But what wasn't tough these days?

A short, socky man pushed into the room, his square face immobile, his pale eyes steady as he gazed at Jerry.

"You still have the same clothes on," he said. "How come you didn't change into something else?"

Jerry wet his lips. "Can we go now?" he said.

The man continued to gaze at him. "Cool customer," he remarked. "Everybody sees the movies nowadays, I guess. Yes, we can go now."

"Mr. Hagen," Jerry's father said tonelessly, "are you sure there isn't some—"

"Ask the boy."

"Jerry, he says you—" His father's voice faltered and stopped.

"Old man Devlin," Jerry said, nodding. "Sure."

No one spoke for a long moment. The man eyed Jerry with a kind of unbelieving look. Like Dad did, Jerry noticed. What was so hard to believe?

"How old are you?" the man asked then.

"Eighteen—almost."

The man frowned. He glanced about him, saw the magneto on the desk, and then picked up one of the comic books.

Downstairs, the dining-room table was deserted as Jerry walked toward the front door. The last mile, he thought wryly. Gingerbread with lemon icing and a big pitcher of milk sat untouched on the table. The food would be different in jail, wouldn't it?

"On the way downtown," the man said, "you can tell me all about the other boy."

Oh no, Jerry told himself firmly. Rat on Cory? Let them find out their own way.

With wide eyes Buzzy and Emily watched Jerry as he went to the front door. Buzzy looked eager, as though he were watching television, but he seemed afraid to look directly into Jerry's eyes. His mother, seated on the edge of the sofa, looked at him too directly, her eyes wet with sorrow, her face drawn.

The man nudged Jerry. "Okay, lad," he said, "the excitement's over for tonight." He glanced at Jerry's mother, his eyes narrowing. "It wasn't the money he needed—just the excitement."

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"What—" His mother stopped and took a breath. "What will they do to him?" she said.

The man shrugged. "That's up to Mr. Devlin, ma'am."

Jerry felt cold. His throat felt thick and there was that same queer breathlessness again. "Mr. Devlin?" he heard himself ask. "But he—he's dead."

The man shook his head. "Slight heart attack, not too bad. He identified you."

"But he—"

"He probably won't press the charge, seeing you left the money there."

Jerry felt as if his chest would burst. "You mean he isn't dead?"

The man looked at him queerly, frowning. "Let's go," he said. He opened the door and motioned Jerry outside.

"I'd like to come along," Jerry's father said. "I'll follow in my car."

Jerry and the man walked down the sidewalk to the waiting car. The sky overhead was dark and cloudless, the air biting. Jerry's lungs hurt from the effort of breathing.

Man, he thought, all this for nothing, all for nothing. Old man Devlin saw Cory too—but nobody saw Harold. He's out of it, anyway. No more waiting for him.

Sitting in the front seat of the car, Jerry had a sudden vision of rescue, the last-minute surge of excitement that would save him, save Cory, save them all. Bombers at twenty thousand feet, he thought. Zero minus four, minus three, minus two, minus one. Release! The queer-shaped bombs tumbled end over end as they hurtled downward through the darkness . . .

"What—" Jerry began and then stopped. He swallowed hard. "What'll you book me on?"

"I don't book anybody," the man said as he started the engine. "I'm a juvenile officer."

"But I thought—"

"You thought you were old enough to rate a cop." The man smiled bitterly. "I'll bet you'd be happier if I were hauling you off to jail."

Startled that the man had guessed what was in his mind, Jerry said nothing. But what does *he* know about it? he asked himself.

"Instead," the man went on, "you've got to keep on living in the world you're in. A big disappointment."

"Well," Jerry burst out, "wouldn't I be better off in jail?"

The man drove in silence for a few moments. Finally he said, "That's a typical attitude—for a minor."

"Don't call me that."

The man turned onto the main thoroughfare that led into the business district. "A minor can't take responsibility," he said. "That's the difference between an adult and you."

"I'm old enough," Jerry retorted. He could feel a confused anger

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churning around inside him. "But how can anybody stand it, waiting around like this? Always waiting. Hung up on a hook and waiting."

"That's what life is, kid."

"Hanging on a hook?"

"Waiting," the man said softly. "You make a decision and wait. You stick to it and wait. You wait to take the rap for it. That's responsibility. A minor wouldn't know."

"Like fun I wouldn't!"

"No," the man insisted, "all you want is to hide behind bars. If you were an adult, you could take it."

"I can take it," Jerry said, almost doggedly.

"No," the man said. "You obviously can't take the responsibility of a man's life. You don't even see how lucky you are that Mr. Devlin's alive."

Jerry sat hunched against the seat cushions, feeling cold and alone and wondering why all of a sudden the man was making sense.

"Well?" the man asked. "Aren't you glad he's alive?"

"I . . ." Jerry held his breath and closed his eyes tight, fighting the sudden sickness he felt. Then, abruptly, the sobs he had been holding back surged up, and he was crying.

"Yes!" he said. "Of course I'm glad! I didn't want to kill him. We were just riding around—it was something to do—"

He broke off, sobbing. The neon signs blurred and misted before his eyes. Ashamed, he wiped his wet face with the back of his hand.

The street around them was lively and bright with cars and lights, people walking, windows brilliant with color.

The man was silent for a long time. "Sometimes," he said then, "it's good to cry."

"It's kid stuff," Jerry said.

"No," the man replied. "Not any more it isn't. Not when you've grown up."

"23 stories make up this fine bedside-fireside-roadside companion, which is to date the year's top bargain."—SERGEANT CUFF, *Saturday Review*

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BIOBIBLIO NOTE

Thomas Narcejac's real name is Pierre Ayraud. He was only ten years old when he first met Arsène Lupin in print—and it was an unforgettable experience. He was only twelve when he discovered Edgar Allan Poe, in the famous Baudelaire translation, and that experience also influenced, perhaps even molded, his life. It is not surprising to learn that years later, as a professor, he became a devotee of publisher Albert Pigasse's Collection du Masque, absorbing, among others, Steeman, Véry, Nord, and Boileau.

Curiously enough, Ayraud never thought of writing himself until 1945, when he was 37. One rainy day during a boring vacation at Saint Malo he decided it might be fun to attempt a pastiche of Simenon. It proved to be so much fun that he promptly continued with pastiches of Conan Doyle, Chesterton, and Agatha Christie. By the time he returned to Paris to resume his professorial duties, he had finished a dozen of these "imitations of life."

When, that same year, his friend Jean Renon founded Les Editions du Portulan and asked the professor for a book, Ayraud submitted his sheaf of pastiches. Renon was delighted with them. For a pseudonym, Ayraud went back to the days of his youth on the Charente River, remembering two hamlets named St. Thomas and Narcejac. Thus, the pen name of Thomas Narcejac was born, and it would always remind Ayraud of pleasant things—the scent of newly mown hay and the tug of a fishing line in the Charente.

The pastiches were followed by a series of scholarly studies of the mystery art form, including THE ESTHETIC OF THE DETECTIVE STORY, *and a series of novels, including* LA MORT EST DU VOYAGE *which won the Grand Prix du Roman d'Aventure for 1948. In that year Narcejac met Pierre Boileau, and this meeting led to their highly successful collaboration whose first joint effort,* SHE WHO WAS NO MORE, *was immediately bought by Clouzot and became the internationally popular motion picture, "Les Diaboliques." The collaboration produced seven more novels in the next seven years, including* D'ENTRE LES MORTS, *filmed by Alfred Hitchcock under the title of "Vertigo."*

In 1959 Maurice Renault, publisher of the French edition of EQMM, came up with one of his many inspired publishing ideas. He gathered Thomas Narcejac's three collections of pastiches, long out of print,

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and combined them in a book called USURPATION D'IDENTITE *(wonderful title!) which he published as a handsome volume in his Club du Livre Policier. And when we saw this definitive collection, we realized that we owed it to American readers to bring them a series of Thomas Narcejac's truly brilliant pastiches. For, as Maurice Renault has pointed out, "the pastiches of Narcejac probe deeply into the basic principles before examining the form itself"; not only does Narcejac cleverly imitate the authors' individual styles, but he also reproduces —sometimes uncannily!—"the special manner each has for writing a detective story."*

The first pastiche we offer is that of Simenon and Inspector Maigret. The ones to follow, as presently planned, will be of Rex Stout and Nero Wolfe, Maurice Leblanc and Arsène Lupin, Ellery Queen and the "Great Man" himself, G. K. Chesterton and Father Brown, Earl Derr Biggers and Charlie Chan, Dorothy L. Sayers and Lord Peter Wimsey, S. S. Van Dine and Philo Vance, Agatha Christie and Hercule Poirot. What a reading prospect!—especially since some of these celebrated sleuths will be appearing in pastiche form for the first time.

After you have finished this first of Narcejac's pastiches to be published in the United States, ask yourself: had "Maigret's Next-to-Last Case" been signed as by Georges Simenon, wouldn't you have accepted it, without question, as the genuine article?

Yes, dear reader, you have some remarkable "usurpations of identity" to look forward to in coming issues!

MAIGRET'S NEXT-TO-LAST CASE

by THOMAS NARCEJAC

(translated by Lawrence G. Blochman)

MAIGRET WAS SLEEPING HEAVILY, his breathing rapid.

"Telephone, Maigret!" said Mme. Maigret, who always called her husband by his family name.

Maigret sighed, groped blindly for the instrument, pressed the receiver to his ear. The diaphragm vibrated to an impatient, nasal voice, and Mme. Maigret caught an occasional word: "Murder . . . clean getaway . . . really serious . . . on her trail . . ."

The Inspector hung up.

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"You're not going to go, are you?" his wife said. "You still have fever. Besides, it's scarcely six o'clock."

But Maigret was already dressing in silence. Occasionally he coughed. Resigned, Mme. Maigret put on the coffee and opened the shutters. A fine rain was falling from the low-hanging March sky.

"Hurry home, at least. If you could only see how you look!"

Maigret shrugged, made a vague gesture, and closed the door behind him. He stopped on the first landing to light his pipe. As he continued down the stairs he turned up his coat collar, grumbling to himself. His hands were clammy with cold sweat.

A bitter wind that smelled of soot was sweeping across the Place des Vosges and Maigret for a moment was tempted to turn around and go home. Instead, he walked to the taxi stand at the corner and got into the first cab.

"To the Quai des Orfèvres, Chief?" asked the taxi driver who had more than once taken the Inspector to headquarters of the Police Judiciaire.

Maigret grunted, wedged himself into a corner of the back seat, and closed his eyes.

Lucas was waiting for him next to a potbellied stove already red-hot.

"Well?" said Maigret. He groaned as he sat down and held out his hands toward the warmth.

"It's a dirty business." Lucas sighed. "The son-in-law of the Dufaure-Verneuils was killed last night. Shot, it seems. Name was Marcenac. Do you know the Dufaure-Verneuils?"

A warm torpor was creeping over Maigret. He wanted to sleep.

Yes, he knew the Dufaure-Verneuils. He could still see the old Baron with his monocle and walking stick, owner of one of the finest racing stables in Paris. He had been killed in a hunting accident, a rather involved and mysterious business that nobody seemed anxious to probe very deeply. The Baroness had been a Mlle. Valmont d'Aigreuse, a celebrated beauty.

"We'll have to avoid scandal," Lucas said.

Maigret's back remained motionless and Lucas wondered if the Inspector had heard him. He switched off the lamp. The damp, pallid daylight seeped into the room with the first of the street noises.

A coughing fit shook Maigret. He was decidedly not at his best.

Lucas hesitated an instant, then said, "We've notified the identity people and the prosecutor's office. Inspector Janvier has already gone out there. But if you're under the weather . . ."

He did not finish. Maigret managed to hoist himself from his chair. He opened the door and

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beckoned to Lucas. They went out together.

Inspector Janvier met them at Le Cassoulet, a little bar from which they could see the Dufaure-Verneuil town house across the street. Maigret was sprawled on the banquette, his derby hat pushed to the back of his neck; he was sipping a hot grog as he watched the passing cars draw lines as straight and neat as rails on the wet pavement. A policeman was pacing like a sentry in front of the wrought-iron gate across the way.

Inspector Janvier spoke volubly. From time to time he would stop to dunk his croissant in his glass, but he swallowed in haste so he could get back to his story.

"Nothing was stolen," he said. "It's obviously a crime of passion. She got away by the service entrance which opens on Rue de l'Yvette. Her lover must have been waiting for her, and by this time they're far away."

"Didn't the servants hear anything?" Lucas asked.

"No. We'll have to question them further, of course, but they sleep on the fourth floor and might not necessarily have heard a pistol shot."

"Couldn't he have called out or rung the bell or made some sort of sound to attract attention?"

"Impossible. To my mind he was killed instantly. There are no bloodstains on the rug except where he fell."

"What about the weapon?"

"We haven't found it yet. His wife must have carried it off. However, we'll see."

Maigret said nothing. He thought nothing. His head ached and he was bone-weary. The words of Inspector Janvier came to him confusedly as he yielded to the kind of invincible somnolence that sometimes overcame him in the summertime as he sat in a barber's chair.

The rain was sketching strange figures on the café windows. The policeman across the street had taken shelter in a doorway. Maigret was dreaming of the day, only a month off now, when he would no longer be an Inspector of the Police Judiciaire. He could already see the little cottage on the banks of the Loire, with the melons and tomatoes growing in the garden, the pale-green beds of lettuce, and the path winding down through the grapevines to the riverside willow grove. Far, far away from the Dufaure-Verneuils . . .

Maigret sneezed, and he saw again the bar, the rain, Janvier and Lucas, as though they were figures in a dream. He signaled with his head and the two Inspectors arose to put on their slickers. Maigret did not open his mouth.

The three of them crossed the street, Maigret bringing up the rear. His legs were of rubber. And he still had to climb the entrance steps and wait until someone answered the bell while the wind

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whipped icy drops of perspiration against the nape of his neck and his ears. He was furious with himself, and with this Marcenac person who—

Silence filled the vast entry hall. They climbed a monumental staircase behind a maid. Their feet sank into the deep, figured pile of a rich carpet.

"Is this lavish?" murmured Lucas softly. "Or super-lavish?"

They entered a small salon, quite modern. Low furniture, flowers, paintings, huge easy chairs. And still the silence, a gloomy silence, a muffled silence which made Maigret's pulses beat thunderously and added to his feeling of uneasiness. He did not even hear the Examining Magistrate come in. He jumped at the sound of the judge's voice.

"The case is closed," the Examining Magistrate announced joyfully to Maigret. "Or it will be as soon as you arrest Madame Marcenac."

Maigret mumbled something unintelligible. In a mirror he saw Lucas gesturing to the judge that it might be better not to pursue the conversation further. He also caught a glimpse of his own chalky face, if it could be called a face, with its oyster-hung eyes and flaming cheeks. He smiled feebly and managed to say, "Let's have a look at the evidence."

The parade was resumed, treading its way through immense, luxurious rooms that smelled of varnish and mustiness. Maigret, whose sense of smell was heightened by his fever, also caught an occasional whiff of another scent: the smoke of an English cigarette.

Marcenac had been killed in his study. He had fallen forward and lay in a curiously contorted position. The photographer from Identity had finished his work and was putting away his cameras. There was no apparent disorder.

Maigret let his skilled glance rove over the library, the work table with its scattered papers, and the soberly decorated walls. He could not seem to place the murder in this inappropriate setting. The corpse itself could not have been more correct: impeccably and elegantly tailored, immaculately shod.

Without knowing exactly why, Maigret turned to the Examining Magistrate. In so doing he noted that Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil was eying him coldly. She was seated on a low divan. She must have once been very beautiful. Despite the unreasonably early hour, she was stylishly dressed, and at the slightest movement she gave off a faint aroma of heliotrope.

Maigret was suddenly aware that he was still wearing his derby. He took it off with a gesture that defied anyone to tell whether he was bowing politely or merely correcting an oversight. Moreover, he did not tarry at the scene of the crime. Without a second glance at the corpse, he walked away, a silent, inscrutable hulk of a man.

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"Don't you want to talk to Dr. Maugis and Monsieur Violle?" asked Inspector Janvier, hurrying after him.

Maigret did not reply.

"He doesn't seem very amiable," said the commanding officer of the district police Commissariat who was overawed by Maigret's reputation.

"He's sick," Lucas explained.

No doubt about it, the investigation was getting off to a bad start. Maigret would have liked to work alone. All these people were getting on his nerves—even Lucas, with his worried and reproving looks, even good old Janvier who was visibly anxious about the chief's health. And this overheated house was intolerable. Maigret was sweating profusely in the suffocating limpness of the steam heat. He clamped his jaws to keep his teeth from chattering. He addressed a pretty maid.

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle. Where is the pantry, please?"

The startled servant cast a suspicious glance on the big, dreamy-eyed man who was mopping his brow.

"Follow me, Monsieur."

They went down a narrow stairway that led to a kitchen bright with copper pots and pans. Maigret immediately spotted an old-fashioned kitchen range, took off his overcoat, and straddled a chair with his back to the stove. He sighed comfortably, seemingly unaware of the couple breakfasting at a small table beside him. The man arose.

"Does monsieur wish something?"

Maigret surveyed the man from head to foot, slowly filled his pipe, and struck a match on the stove behind him.

"Does monsieur need anything?"

For the first time since he had got out of bed that morning Maigret smiled. He pointed at the table.

"A cup of coffee and two aspirin tablets."

Visibly relieved, the man bowed and left.

"Chauffeur?" Maigret asked.

"Yes, Monsieur," the woman replied, bringing Maigret a steaming cup. "He's my husband. He also acts as butler. I do the cooking."

"What's your name?"

"Renée. And my husband's name is Julien. But Madame doesn't like my name so she calls me Marie."

Julien came back with a box of aspirins on a tray. Maigret smiled again. "Have you been working here long?"

Julien replied, "We've been here since the death of Monsieur the Baron. That will be ten years in three weeks."

"And the little blonde who showed me downstairs?"

"She's a new girl," Renée said quickly. "She's been here only a month."

Silence. The couple resumed eating. Maigret relaxed. The warmth

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from the stove was getting into his veins. His head was clearing. He thrust his hot pipe into his pocket. He was suddenly hungry himself. He stood up.

"May I?"

The bread was freshly baked. He refused the jam which Marie offered him and cut himself a slice of ham. With his thumb he clamped it to his bread.

"If Mme. Maigret could only see me now," he thought. "Of course, I am a complete idiot. I'm going to be sick as a dog." But his appetite was really coming back. He poured himself a glass of Beaujolais, and smacked his lips.

"Good wine."

Somewhat disconcerted at first, the man and woman were gaining confidence.

"Have you arrested her?"

"Who?"

"Madame."

Maigret was beaming. He paced the kitchen between the table and the range. The aspirins had begun to work.

"Tell me everything you know," he said, but when Julien started to talk, Maigret interrupted him. He pointed his knife at Renée: "You."

"We don't know very much, Monsieur. We were awakened at half-past five. Madame told us that her son-in-law had been killed and that Madame had disappeared."

"Who's that—Madame?"

"Madame's daughter, Mme. Marcenac. Madame said that Mme. Marcenac had killed her husband and that she had run off through the Rue de l'Yvette. And it's true that the Rue de l'Yvette door was not locked from the inside."

"Did Mme. Marcenac have any reason to be angry with her husband?"

"I don't think so, Monsieur. She married him against Madame's wishes. There were some violent quarrels before the marriage. Of course I don't know exactly why, Monsieur. Madame does not discuss her affairs with me. But one can't help noticing things."

"Monsieur Marcenac was not a good match?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur. He was a very kind man."

"That's not what I mean. Was he rich?"

"Well, not as rich as Madame. But he was very proper, very respectable. And he wasn't conceited."

"Did he deceive his wife?"

"Certainly not, Monsieur. He was most attentive to her."

"How did he get along with his mother-in-law?"

"He was very polite. He tried to please her. He often took Monsieur Armand driving, and Monsieur Armand is not exactly good-natured."

Maigret stopped eating. Lucas had said nothing about any Armand.

"Who is this Armand?"

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"Why, he's Madame's son—Monsieur Dufaure-Verneuil."

"Why haven't I seen him?"

"Monsieur doesn't know?" Renée's expression was still one of astonishment. "Monsieur Armand is a cripple. He can hardly walk because of that disease he had when he was little: polo—poli—"

"Poliomyelitis?"

"That's it. He uses crutches. He's still in bed at this hour."

"How old is he?"

"About twenty, I think."

Maigret relit his pipe. His headache was better. He was beginning to see the characters in the play.

"Who is Monsieur Violle?"

"He's a friend of Madame's. He comes to the house quite often."

"And Dr. Maugis?"

"He's the family physician."

Maigret was smoking in small, rapid puffs. His derby was pushed down over his eyes. He was thinking.

"What did the deceased do for a living?"

"Why, nothing, Monsieur."

"And before his marriage?"

"Ah, that I couldn't say."

"Do you like your employer?"

The question startled both servants. But the Inspector wore a simple, kindly expression that banished all distrust.

"She's rather strict, but she's not really mean."

"She pays well," Julien added.

"Who took care of the Marcenac's rooms?"

"I did," Renée said.

"Could I see Mme. Marcenac's bedroom?"

"Of course, Monsieur."

Mme. Marcenac's bedroom was very simply furnished. Maigret was surprised. The bed, the chairs, the narrow clothes-press smelled of poverty.

A heavy scent of violets hung on the warm air.

The vast dimensions of the room, the rich wainscoting, the decorated ceiling—and then the cheap furniture.

The bed was unmade.

Maigret stepped into the bathroom. He examined bottles and glasses. He took his time. Suddenly his eyes sparked with interest.

"Did you know that Mme. Marcenac had broken this bottle of perfume?"

"No, Monsieur. She must have broken it last night."

"Mme. Marcenac wore mules, didn't she?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Pink mules.

Maigret turned his back on the broken glass. Absently sucking on his cold pipe, he again surveyed the bedroom. Something near the window caught his eye. He stooped and ran his finger over the flooring. Renée thought she heard him swearing between his teeth.

"When was this window last opened?"

"It's never opened, Monsieur.

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Madame catches cold very easily. She doesn't like me to air the room."

Maigret unhurriedly went back downstairs. Julien had hung up his wet overcoat to dry in the kitchen, and was shining shoes.

"Would Monsieur like another cup of coffee?"

Maigret said nothing. Hands in his pockets, he seemed to be contemplating the varied reflections from the gleaming battery of kitchen utensils. Surprised and somewhat uneasy, the servants lapsed into silence. Julien paused with his brush in mid-air.

"Judging from the portrait I saw upstairs, Mme. Marcenac looks very much like her mother."

Renée pouted. "Their features are much the same, but not their expressions. And then Mme. Marcenac is smaller and slimmer than her mother."

Maigret pointed to a pair of high-heeled pumps that Julien was smearing with cream polish.

"Those are Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil's shoes, aren't they?" he held out his hand.

"Monsieur had better take the clean one. This one is still muddy."

Maigret dropped his hand and backed away. At that moment Lucas appeared. He stopped in the doorway and scowled. Maigret put on his overcoat.

"All right, Lucas. I'm coming. So what have you done about Mme. Marcenac?"

"Nothing yet. We've been waiting for you. I'll give her photo to the newspapers. We'll watch the railway stations . . ."

"If you want."

"What do you mean, if—" Lucas glanced uneasily at Maigret. He thought: The boss is delirious.

"What does the Medical Examiner say?"

"We'll have his report very soon."

"No hurry," said Maigret casually. And turning to Renée and Julien who were standing respectfully, he added, "Excellent, this Beaujolais."

He poured himself another two fingers of the red wine. He enjoyed the look of consternation on Lucas's face.

"I've been wondering," Maigret said softly, "why you got out of bed."

"Are you feeling worse?" asked Inspector Janvier solicitously.

Lucas, still sulking, was warming his glass of cognac with the palm of his hand. The sky was clearing, and an anemic ray of sunlight shone obliquely on the rows of bottles. The Le Cassoulet bar was empty at this hour.

Lucas gave up trying to understand Maigret's leisurely, nonchalant attitude. Why had the Inspector return to the bistro? What was he waiting for? Impossible to get a word out of him. And now he was wondering *why* he had been called!

Lucas emptied his glass at one

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swallow and tossed a coin on the table.

"Leaving us?" Maigret asked. "Chasing the fugitive?"

"Nom d'un chien!" Lucas exploded. "We've got to do something. She's got six or seven hours' start on us. I'm going to make the stations."

"If you want."

Again that phrase!

Never had the Inspector conducted an investigation in such an incoherent manner. His bronchitis was getting worse, that was evident. He ought to give up and go home.

Maigret called Lucas back.

"I want you to cover the hotels around the Saint-Lazare station," he said. "Telephone me here as soon as you find something.'

Lucas scrutinized Maigret's face. Was the Inspector serious? Did he know something? Maigret, his elbows on the table, puffed inscrutably on his pipe. Lucas slammed the door behind him.

Janvier and Maigret sat in silence. Somewhere behind a partition came the sound of a water faucet dripping and a brush scrubbing the floor. The barman moved bottles and from time to time glanced at the two men.

Maigret was thinking of the Dufaure-Verneuils. The son-in-law, insignificant, probably married as a whim. The son . . .

Inspector Janvier pouted exactly as Renée had done an hour earlier.

"A poor little guy . . . A cripple, what?"

Yes, a cripple who tyrannized his family. Maigret pictured him clumping through the shadowy salons on his crutches, seeing himself in some gilt-framed mirror at every turn. And the son-in-law, a queer, timid soul who flattered Armand, took him out, humoring all his fancies, bowing and scraping before his haughty mother-in-law.

Lucienne Marcenac . . . Did she love her husband? Or had she remained faithful to her girlhood dream of some gallant knight who would set her free from her mother, from her brother, from the overpowering luxury of the town-house? Was not Lucienne's shabby bedroom proof that she sought to make her husband forget his role of eternal parasite into which he had slipped so easily? Her bedroom was her refuge, the only place in the house where the power of the Dufaure-Verneuils could not touch her. Even the cripple, the cripple and his English cigarettes, could not disturb her there.

"Your *husband!* Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil must have pronounced that with a peculiar note of cruel disdain which only she could manage. Maigret could almost hear her, and was ashamed for Lucienne. What would people say? The old lady must have remarked as she forbade the couple to leave her town house. People! They must have concern for people . . . and

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for Armand. It was imperative that the cripple be amused, taken to the movies. It was imperative that people not think him abandoned to the mercenary care of servants.

Maigret knocked the ashes from his pipe and swallowed his hot grog, now nearly cold, at one draft.

"Janvier, gallop over to the Medico-Legal Institute. I'm expecting the Medical Examiner's report."

Inspector Janvier could see that the case was beginning to take shape. He grabbed his hat and left.

Yes, there had been a hint of annoyance in the eyes of the Baroness when Maigret talked to her —or perhaps it had been uneasiness rather than annoyance. He tried to analyze his impression, but it was no use. A painful emptiness was forming behind his eyes and his temples were throbbing again.

And yet the Baroness had accused her daughter with all the calm and poise of a disinterested witness. It was Janvier who had mentioned it as they crossed the street to Le Cassoulet. Yes, on second thought, it was definitely uneasiness. She must have been expecting a torrent of questions, and when she received nothing more than a cold stare from Maigret, she had been disturbed.

Maigret now held all the threads in his hands. He could feel all the characters. Why had they got him out of bed? Really it was all so simple, so sordidly simple!

He sighed. Again he was having trouble breathing. A feverish numbness had taken possession of his arms and legs. The sky had darkened. A gray light filled the bar. Behind the partition the leaky faucet dripped interminably. A vague nausea bothered the Inspector. He had better finish with all this nonsense.

He was just getting to his feet when Janvier appeared.

"What calibre?" Maigret asked.

"Six thirty-five."

"What time did Marcenac die?"

"About eleven o'clock."

"Killed instantly?"

"No. He was unconscious for some time. If anyone had heard the shot and come to his rescue immediately, he could have been saved."

"The bitch."

"A fine wench, I must say."

"Not at all. She—" Maigret stopped short and shrugged. Then he added, "Look. I want you to stay right here. When Lucas gets back, come for me."

Monsieur Violle was a pink-cheeked, gray-haired sixty. He wore a close-clipped mustache, striped trousers, and light-colored spats.

This is the family friend, Maigret said to himself and decided that he must be more blunt, more surly. He was in a hurry to wind things up.

"How did you learn of the murder?"

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"Well, it was like this . . . er . . . I was awakened this morning —I mean to say, someone rang my bell. Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil and Dr. Maugis had come to tell me of the death of Marcenac, and then—"

"What time was it?"

"Let's see now . . . it was, I think, about half-past five. Yes, that's it. Five thirty. I remember that—"

"Why didn't Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil telephone you?"

"She had just awakened the doctor, and since I live practically next door, she wanted, you understand, to tell me the awful news. It's a great shock, poor thing, that she—"

"Why did you say 'poor thing?'"

"Because Jeanne—well, Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil, if you prefer—was very fond of her son-in-law."

"That's a lie!" muttered Maigret impatiently. "Go on."

Monsieur Violle, obviously mortified, clasped and unclapsed his hands nervously. His stammer increased, yet the Inspector was still able to understand that Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil, having awakened at five o'clock, had gone down to the second floor to see if Armand was sleeping soundly, since he had not been feeling well. She noted a light in the study and found Marcenac lying dead. Not wishing to disturb Armand—the wall between the study and Armand's bedroom was quite thin—she had not telephoned anyone. She had dressed and gone for Dr. Maugis. On their way back they had stopped for Violle.

The story stood up. It also explained the Baroness's muddy shoes.

"So Armand did not hear the shot?"

"Armand had taken sleeping pills. The dear child is really not well. He has been very much upset these last few days. Dr. Maugis can tell you better than I. He has been taking care of the boy."

"And how did Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil determine that her daughter was the murderer?"

"Madame Marcenac was not in her room, and the service entrance giving on the Rue de l'Yvette was open. In these circumstances—"

"Enough, enough."

Monsieur Violle was even more mortified. He stopped talking.

In one way, this is a very fine case, Maigret thought. Almost no clues. The sound of the shot? We could always re-enact the crime, but that would probably be a waste of time.

He sighed. Perhaps he had been overoptimistic. Perhaps this was not as easy as he had thought. In any event, there was nothing more to be had from this straw man.

"I should like to see Mme. Dufaure."

He turned his back on the man he had been questioning and planted himself, legs apart, before a painting of Venus which hung on one wall of the salon.

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He felt the fever creeping over him and was on the point of going down to the kitchen again when a faint whisper of silk warned him that the Baroness had just come in. He did not turn around.

Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil was a worthy adversary. She said nothing.

Very well, if she insisted on joining battle . . .

Maigret spun on his heel. His eyes quickly engaged those of the Baroness and he immediately caught the same expression he had noted earlier in the day. He scrutinized her with all the insolence he could summon. She in turn calmly parried the attack with the slightest hint of haughty disdain.

"What happened here last night?"

The blunt question of the Inspector did not seem to surprise her. Standing with her head turned toward the window as though to watch the raindrops wriggle across the pane, she spoke in a monotone. Her story was practically word for word the same as that of the little old man—what was his name now? Violle, or something like that. Maigret was not even listening to the Baroness.

A fine-looking woman, the Baroness. No doubt about that, a fine-looking woman. Twenty years ago she had been notorious for her free and easy way of life. Madame Maigret would have called her "that creature."

Suddenly the Inspector interrupted the Baroness. "Did your son-in-law go out often with Armand?"

Slowly Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil swung her eyes back to Maigret.

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Where is your son?"

"In his room. He is very tired. He was awakened early, naturally, by the arrival of the police. The news of his brother-in-law's death has upset him terribly."

"Did your daughter own a revolver?"

"Her husband kept one in his desk drawer. She took that."

"What could have been her motive?"

"I don't know. But I suspect she was not very fond of her husband."

"Why not?"

"My son-in-law did not have very much—well, call it luck—in anything he undertook. He never received his law degree, he was unsuccessful in business, and he finally ended up doing nothing."

"But your fortune has kept the couple from starving, I assume?"

"Certainly. Nevertheless, my daughter was very anxious that her husband find something to do."

Maigret knew all this. He didn't even ask the Baroness if Lucienne had a lover. He was sure he knew the answer to that question, too.

He was also positive now that the emotion which dimmed the eyes of the Baroness was fear. She remained in complete control of her voice and her gestures, how-

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ever. Her cold, reserved attitude seemed to erase Maigret from her world. For her he was nothing but a cop and a boor.

At another time Maigret would have amused himself by undermining her arrogant poise, but not today. What good would it do? He shivered. It was really rotten luck for him to get sick just a month before he was to retire. And that cottage waiting for him on the banks of the shining Loire—the weather would be sunny down there, of course. Maigret was sure of it.

Neither of them spoke. The silence was scarcely broken by the faint hiss of tires on wet pavement and the croak of auto horns. Maigret leisurely paced the room. He looked at his watch. She takes me for a clumsy lout, he thought. And in an hour it will all be over.

He went to the window and raised the shade. The passersby seemed like disembodied umbrellas, gleaming as if they had been waxed, sliding along the street.

Suddenly Lucas came up the front steps.

Maigret stepped in front of Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil and went out without a word.

"I found her valise . . ." Lucas was panting. He must have been running. ". . . in a hotel near the Gare Saint-Lazare. She had filled out her registration form for the police. She arrived around quarter past midnight and took a room. She left soon afterward. The night clerk recognized her photo. No doubt about it. I went through her valise. We've got her now. I've already—"

Maigret stopped him. He was frowning. A new certainty was dawning on him. He had expected the valise. But if by any mischance —There was not a minute to lose.

"Scoundrel!"

Lucas jumped. "What did you say?"

Maigret had already grasped his arm and was pushing him toward the door.

"Run. Hurry. Take a taxi. Wait, the address is—"

What was the matter with his memory anyhow? Why couldn't he remember a simple number? Beads of perspiration surrounded his ears.

"Mademoiselle!" Maigret called to the maid who was passing down the hall. They conferred briefly. Then Maigret gave Lucas an address: 2 Rue Delzous.

"Search the house thoroughly. Move—on the double!"

"But that house belongs to—"

"Take off!"

Maigret leaned against the wall. A rumbling filled his head, and he wanted to sit down. Suddenly he remembered that Lucas was probably unarmed. He walked slowly to the front door.

"Lucas!"

The detective had reached the wrought-iron gate. He retraced his steps.

"Catch!"

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Maigret threw Lucas his pistol, closed the door, and sat down on the floor, his derby beside him. He loosened his collar and breathed deeply—he should never have eaten anything. Come now, one more effort, the last.

He walked down the hall, taking small steps. He stopped at Armand's door. He could hear whispering inside.

Without even knocking, Maigret turned the door handle. Armand and his mother whirled to face him. They were both pale, and with reason. Maigret was a disturbing sight, massive, livid, unkempt, staring at them with wild eyes.

"By what right, Monsieur—?"

Suddenly beside herself, the Baroness bore down on Maigret who was closing the door behind him.

The Inspector did not even see her. He was studying Armand.

The cripple was exactly as he had imagined him, thin, sickly, with a blotched face; wrinkles around the eyes; an expression that was at once sly and sensual. He was seated before a small desk, the drawer of which he had pushed shut the moment Maigret entered. He still held the key in his knobby, hairy hand—the typical bestial hand of an ailing adolescent.

Maigret pushed Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil aside.

"Come now, give it to me."

Armand sat as though frozen. Little by little his features seemed to shrink. Maigret could have sworn that his slightly protruding ears were trembling. He had the eyes of a madman.

"Give it to me," Maigret repeated.

Then everything happened at once—the hand plunging into the drawer, the thunderclap of gunfire, and now Armand collapsed on one elbow, sobbing.

"Idiot!" said Maigret, picking up the automatic.

It was a 6.35 mm.

He removed the cartridges from the magazine. "Three, and one in the chamber makes four. A bullet in the wall, five. And the sixth—?"

The Baroness sat down on the corner of a chair.

Nobody moved. Armand's sobbing made small, wet sounds, a little like the dripping faucet behind the partition at Le Cassoulet.

Maigret took off his coat and straddled a chair between mother and son.

"Why did you kill him?"

The Inspector reached out a forceful hand and lifted Armand's chin. The lad scowled like a thwarted, ill-tempered brat.

"Little hoodlum," said Maigret in a tone that was almost cordial. "So it was women, eh?"

He was fumbling at the back of the drawer, and drew forth a small album. He shook his head as he leafed through it. Very special photographs of very special poses. An old story to Maigret. So that's how the cripple and his pitiful

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brother-in-law spent their leisure! Marcenac must have resisted, on account of his wife, although Lucienne surely had some forebodings. But if Marcenac had refused to accompany Armand on his cute little expeditions, Armand could have run to his mother and had his brother-in-law's allowance cut off. What must have happened was that Marcenac had finally revolted, and using the same tactics, had threatened to tell Armand's mother the whole story. So Armand had killed him.

"Who owns the gun? Marcenac bought it for you, didn't he?"

Armand nodded.

"You had to have excitement, eh? You terrorized him."

He tossed the album into the Baroness's lap. She brushed it aside.

Suddenly Maigret understood: she had known all along! She knew the exact nature of her son's amusements, but her family pride made her forgive him. It was Marcenac she hated—Marcenac who could walk without crutches, Marcenac whom her daughter loved more than her mother, Marcenac the prisoner of Lucienne, of Armand, of the Dufaure-Verneuils, Marcenac who spun around in this overheated town house like a squirrel in a cage, yielding more and more to despair, until the night the cripple had—

"So you thought you could save your son by accusing your daughter?"

Armand and his mother started.

In a low voice the Inspector pursued his thought.

"You gave Armand a sleeping pill and you hid the gun. You then thought of Dr. Maugis. Very probably he was in no position to refuse you anything?"

For the first time in her life the Baroness blushed in the presence of her son.

"You went to report the accident. The two of you dreamed up a cunning scheme. The doctor supplied the chloroform and you drugged the sleeping Lucienne in her own bed. And while the doctor carried her off in his own car to his own apartment, you threw some of Lucienne's things in a valise and hurried off to the nearest railway station. You and your daughter look very much alike. This resemblance could easily confuse a sleepy night clerk. You took a hotel room. The police were to believe that she had taken a train. Detectives would begin interminable investigations, leading nowhere.

"Unfortunately you made mistakes. You see, it is not easy to be a good criminal. First of all, the kidnaping of your daughter was undertaken at an hour when there were still people in the streets, even a street as calm as the Rue de l'Yvette. Second, you forgot to leave Lucienne's mules in her room, and you neglected to make her bed. Had Mme. Marcenac intended killing her husband, she

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would not have gone to bed last night. This error alone would have been enough to give you away.

"But Dr. Maugis came back during your absence to commit two more errors. As the bedroom still smelled strongly of chloroform, he opened the window and the rain came in—the flooring under the window was still wet this morning. Finally, to cover up any vestige of the chloroform odor which still remained, he broke a bottle of perfume. By so doing *he called attention to the very thing he was trying to hide.*

"One look at the bedroom was enough to spell kidnaping in big letters. So, if your daughter had been kidnaped, suspicion must point to you. And you had so many reasons to hold a grudge against Lucienne. Armand is your son, isn't he?"

Mme. Dufaure-Verneuil's lips tightened for an instant, but her face showed no other emotion.

Maigret went on, "Nobody had the slightest concern for Marcenac during the long hours of your plotting and counterplotting. During all this time he clung desperately to life. *He might have been saved!*"

Maigret picked up the album of erotica from the floor and slipped it into his pocket. Armand had stopped crying.

"Follow me," said Maigret.

Armand reached for his crutches.

Whereupon the Baroness slid silently from her chair in a dead faint.

In the hall Maigret ran into Lucas, who was panting for breath.

"You've got her?" Maigret demanded.

"She's downstairs in a taxi. The pill-roller is in the jug."

"High time." Maigret sighed. "They probably planned to kill her, too. I thought at first they'd put her away in some nursing home. Maugis surely had plenty of contacts for making Mme. Marcenac disappear into some sanitarium. Still, in a moment of panic, he might just as easily have injected her with an overdose of some sedative. And her mother would not even have protested."

Maigret came home completely exhausted. Bright spots danced before his eyes. Mme. Maigret was obviously worried. She turned down the bed and ran to prepare a hot-water bottle, never once taking her eyes off her husband.

The Inspector's teeth were chattering.

Vaguely he heard Mme. Maigret sigh, "And I've cooked such a good fricandeau. He always loves my braised veal with white wine and vegetables."

Inspector Maigret sank into a deep sleep.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **MAURICE BAUDIN, JR.**

TITLE: ***The Honeymoon Murders***

DETECTIVE: Rogers of Triumphant Insurance

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Miss Marguerite Gillespie, retired schoolteacher, had a faded sweetness and sad eyes; she was frail and silvery—and she had murdered three husbands . . .*

HAD NOT A CLERK RAKING through old company correspondence observed a surprising similarity in the handwriting of three quite unrelated letters, the matter might never have come to light. The letters were dated several years apart, and each stated that the writer, widowed some weeks before, had just discovered a policy which her husband had carried with Triumphant Insurance.

In no single case were the facts suspicious. Only when Triumphant became aware, belatedly, that all three settlements had been with one woman, did the circumstances seem pointed.

An inquiry provided information concerning the habitual widow. Marguerite Gillespie had taught French in a high school in a small city until her fiftieth year when, after a nervous breakdown, she retired early on a pension. Almost immediately she revived sufficiently to be married to a Mr. Johnson, retired businessman.

After their justice-of-the-peace wedding, the two left for a short trip. Three days later the report came that the bridegroom was dead and that his ashes, at his request, were to be scattered from the air over a large lake where he fished in the summer.

© *1945 by Maurice Baudin Jr.; first published in* ESQUIRE, *April 1945, titled "The End of Indian Summer."*

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His death was a mild shock to his friends and business acquaintances, and they had not suspected him of having a poetical streak. Mrs. Johnson, it was understood, was too distraught to face scenes of the origin of her short-lived happiness, and would travel quietly alone.

When next she reappeared in the record, several years had elapsed and many miles covered. Miss Gillespie was living quietly as a retired schoolteacher, understood to be the possessor of a modest competency beyond her pension. None of her new friends was aware that she had ever abandoned her maiden name.

Her neighbors of this period still remembered how assiduously Mr. Martin, a real estate man, retired, had courted her, and spoke of the lovely autumnal quality of the romance. The marriage was quiet and was immediately followed by a little journey whose end Mr. Martin did not live to see. His final request was that his ashes be scattered over Wildfree Acres, a subdivision he had helped develop and which had dominated his conversation for years.

The wish had to be ignored because of the residents' protests. What alternative disposition the bride made of the remains was not known. In absentia she sold her house and the properties of Mr. Martin and never returned to the spot where love had glowed so briefly.

It was three years after, when she was fifty-seven, that Miss Gillespie's course next emerged from limbo. She was moving in academic circles then, in a quiet university town. The theory of mutual friends was that Emeritus Professor Mathews, author of a monumental work entitled *The Flora and Fauna of the Yosemite Valley*, married her because of her adeptness at arranging his botanical notes for publication.

It was sad that his death came ultimely on their wedding trip before he could fully utilize her talents. His ashes were scattered by plane over the Yosemite Valley, where it is to be hoped that least some of them fell on the flora and fauna. His bride was too shattered to return to the university town.

The deaths were too alike to be regarded as natural or accidental. The Company believed, once it had spotted Miss Gillespie as the common denominator, that, from the similarity of the courtships to the poetic if slightly monotonous dispositions of the last earthly remains, the melancholy sequence of events proclaimed itself as the work of one mind, that, not God's.

The inquiry traced Miss Gillespie to her present home, in a town named LaFayette, and Mr. Rogers trustworthy member of the investigation staff of the Claims Department, was sent to LaFayette, although there seemed little chance of reopening the case.

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Mr. Rogers arrived at LaFayette in the capacity of a manufacturer's representative. The first thing he did in his hotel room was to look into the telephone directory. There was her name, Marguerite Gillespie, Church Street.

There was no difficulty in locating her. The difficulty would be in the approach. He had to know her situation and her plans and win her confidence if he were going to uncover anything to break open those past murders.

His first job was to establish himself as a legitimate, visiting businessman. So for a few days he talked hardware specialties up and down Main Street, used the Elks Club, and wrote letters publicly on his hardware company stationery.

She probably had a little capital. She would be greedy. Perhaps the best way would be to work into a business deal with her, if he could ease into it naturally.

She owned her house. He found that out by talking real estate and the development of the town with the hotel proprieor. One of the few newcomers was Miss Gillespie. She was around sixty but spry, the landlord said, a mighty nice lady, mighty nice old maid. The town was bound to grow after they widened the state highway, the landlord said.

Mr. Rogers talked about the highway for a while and then started back to his favorite chair, only to observe that it had been usurped by another man. His eyes met the stranger's for a second time, and he felt a distinct shock of recognition —and recognition not of person but of profession.

It was impossible for anyone in the game as long as he to mistake that air of deliberate aimlessness, those eyes that watched without staring. And yet, why should the home office have sent *another* detective to LaFayette?

For the man must represent Triumphant, their company being the sole loser in the case. That had been checked automatically in the hope that other victims might contribute other facts. Mr. Rogers could only conclude that the home office was watching him, and he was definitely annoyed.

When he turned at the door to glance back at his rival, and the man *winked,* all his suspicions were confirmed. Scorning the overture, which seemed to invite a collaboration of which he wanted no part, Rogers went to his hotel room where for a short time he brooded.

As its would-be purchaser, Mr. Rogers knocked at the door of the little colonial bungalow on Church Street. His first sight of Marguerite Gillespie was his first surprise. Faded sweetness, eyes large and sad and a little humorous, were qualities omitted from his Medusa-like preconception of the fatal woman. Nor did he, on seeing her, expect a cordial response to the

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story of his passing and admiring the house.

In no time he sat in the parlor near a small table whose sole display was a large tome entitled *The Flora and Fauna of the Yosemite Valley*. Mr. Rogers had just been introduced to a silver-haired old gentleman with a gold watch chain, a fine profile, and a slight stoop. This was Mr. Raymond; and all the detective's instincts warned him that he saw the man destined—would the woman never stop?—to be Miss Gillespie's next husband.

"You wouldn't be interested in selling your house?" Mr. Rogers hazarded. "It's a nervy thing to ask," he went on quickly, "but I'm sort of taken with the place. I thought you might—" He stopped. A transformation had taken place in Miss Gillespie. Her look of delight indicated that she regarded his coming as providential.

"Well," she said, her eyes shining, "I really don't know what to say. It hadn't crossed my mind to sell, but still—" She showed her pleasure as she turned to Mr. Raymond. "What do you think, Charles?"

Mr. Rogers' heart thumped. So the land lay that way already.

Mr. Raymond, from his chair, gave her a courteous little half bow and a gentle smile. "That I leave entirely to you, my dear. My one concern is your happiness, and as for material considerations—" he waved them away. To remove himself from the discussion, he picked up *The Flora and Fauna of the Yosemite Valley* and began to turn the pages. A chill ran down Mr. Rogers' spine.

Miss Gillespie gave a smile that took in both her guests. Mr. Rogers felt swayed in his belief of what he knew. She looked so frail, frailer even than Mr. Raymond, more silvery yet than he. The detective was touched. It's Indian Summer, he thought.

"Mr. Raymond and I plan to be married," Miss Gillespie said simply, and Mr. Rogers came to earth with a jolt. "We don't know where we'll live. We're free to go where we like, and I think the climate in LaFayette is bad for Mr. Raymond."

The old man looked up and smiled roguishly. "There's but one reason I've stayed so long, and it would keep me here always. You know what it is."

Miss Gillespie flushed. Her eyes sparkled as if she had taken a strong drink. She smiled appealingly at Mr. Rogers, who grimaced back mechanically. The sinister had overcome the seemingly tender, and the detective's one concern was to save a deluded old man from murder most foul.

"You know," Miss Gillespie shyly confessed, "we haven't a plan. Nothing, that is, beyond a simple little wedding trip."

Mr. Rogers nodded. He under-

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stood perfectly. No need, of course to plan anything beyond that. He said gruffly, "I'm sure I wish you every happiness. And about the house—I don't want to hurry you. I'll be at the Manor House for a few days, and you can get in touch with me there. Now in case you don't decide till after you've left town—" That would be too late, he thought. He must take some step before then. But what?

"In that case," Miss Gillespie said eagerly, "Burton's will be my agents. Burton's down on the Square. I bought the house through them, and have found them very pleasant." She sighed happily. "Very gentlemanly and obliging. I had expected," she continued ruminatively, "to spend the rest of my life in this little house. But now—" she smiled, and her glance rested for a moment on Mr. Raymond.

"But now," Mr. Rogers supplied mentally, "You have a chance you didn't expect for one last fling, and you can't turn it down." All he said was, "Thank you for your kindness, Miss Gillespie. And you know where to get in touch with me." He rose from his chair.

Mr. Raymond put down the book and advanced with cordially outstretched hand. The detective forced words of congratulation while Miss Gillespie blushed lightly. The old man glowed. With his fragility, his fine features and parchment-like skin, and his glowing happiness, he looked like eternal goodness; and Mr. Rogers pitied him and resolved to save the old man.

"To some," declared Mr. Raymond, "it comes early, and to some never. To some it comes late, and perhaps they are the luckiest." He beamed fondly on his fiancée. "Now what was that French statement we ran across?"

"I've been giving him French lessons," Miss Gillespie explained. *"Si la jeunesse connaît, si la vieillesse pouvait."*

"That's it!" exclaimed Mr. Raymond. "If youth knew, if age could. An utter lie, Mr. Rogers."

Mr. Rogers left quickly.

At the corner stood the grinning rival detective. "Any luck?"

Mr. Rogers said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Well, I thought we might pool what we know."

Mr. Rogers was tempted. Together they might have the grounds needed to arrest the human spider. Then he remembered Triumphant had insulted him by putting another man on the job. "You go to hell," he said, and walked away.

As soon as Mr. Rogers appeared the next morning, the other detective greeted him. His air was dejected now. "I thought you might be interested to know," he said bitterly, "that they've skipped."

Mr. Rogers forgot all barriers of pride. "God! When? Where?"

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The other man named a town twenty miles away. The pair had entrained several hours before. Where they were now, he said vindictively, God only knew.

"Why all the speed?" asked Rogers.

"I thought maybe you talked too much yesterday. What the devil did you say?"

"Why, I only offered to buy the house," Mr. Rogers said weakly. His heart was sick for the old man, now past all help.

"That did it. That was all a certain party was waiting for to see how easy it would be to sell the house. Now that it won't do any good, I'm Saunders, from Reliable."

They shook hands. "But—where do you come into this?" Mr. Rogers demanded. "Reliable didn't insure any of her husbands."

"What husbands?" said Saunders. "I'm talking about Raymond's wives. That old coot had six that we know of. All drowned in the bathtub and all six on their honeymoons."

"All three of her husbands were dead and cremated in a few days," said Rogers. The two investigators checked facts rapidly. "What to do?" Rogers said. "We don't know where they've gone. We haven't any case for sending out an alarm. And those babies work fast."

"Take it easy," said Saunders. "It all depends on whether she takes her first bath before she gets a crack at his breakfast food . . . or vice versa."

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

The tenth "first story" in nine consecutive issues of EQMM—and more to come! Keep up the good work, beginners everywhere! As always, EQMM welcomes newcomers to the field of crime, detection, mystery, and suspense; as always, the editorial doors of EQMM are wide open to fresh talent, to writers young and old who wish to break into print, to all who have promise . . .

The author of this "first story"—an ironic tale of the eternal war of the sexes—is in her early thirties, and her chief occupation is that of "housewife and mother." She and her husband "lead as calm a suburban life as one can with an active 18-month-old son, a Welsh terrier with odd phobias, and a fairly steady influx of relatives and friends . . . We have a unique little home dug into the bank of Lake Erie and spend the summers battling erosion and raccoons, the winters trying to outwit Canadian gales."

Mrs. Austin's "first story" takes place on Lake Erie; so, you see, she is on the right track—writing of what she knows . . . Good luck, housewife, mother, and author!

LADIES FIRST

by MARGARET C. AUSTIN

IT WAS THE KIND OF DAY WHEN ordinarily obedient dogs bite their masters, when ideas, frozen during the winter months, boil to the surface of men's minds. It was hot and seemed even hotter, coming as it did on a long string of "scorchers."

The temperature was 95°, the discomfort reading 86, and down in Public Square a photographer tried to fry an egg at the base of Soldiers Monument. It didn't quite fry but it solidified enough to make a good picture in the *News*.

At Edgewater the beach and water merged into a single expanse of sweltering flesh; at Huntington all sections of the beach were opened to the melting multitudes who sought what relief the lake had to offer. The yacht clubs were busy and the river docks were emptying as the business day ended . . .

George Hicks studied the boats skittering across the waterfront as his bus halted again in the heavy Shoreway traffic. The paper had promised thundershowers, with a break in the heat, but there was no

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sign of either. If he were lucky, Sheila might have dinner ready so they could get out quickly with the Lyman for some water skiing.

The bus directly ahead gunned its motor and George caught its full gassy exhaust through an open window—as if the heat weren't enough . . .

The grill was set up in the patio, with hamburgers and hashed browns in foil awaiting a chef. George fanned the charcoal to furnace-red before putting on the food.

As Sheila settled into the aluminum chaise with an icy beer, she said, "It's just too hot to cook inside tonight. Isn't this much more pleasant?"

He was lost in a whirlpool of shimmering heat, its center the iron grill and its rim the grease splats from the cooking meat; but he dutifully replied, "Yes dear."

Maybe the idea should have emerged then, but it didn't even ripple his conscious mind.

By seven o'clock they had the boat away from its dock space and were moving slowly down the river, under the bridge and past the yacht club. From the veranda several members raised gin and tonics in a languid salute as they slipped by.

"Look at them up there, George, with their haughty airs. Huh, probably even their cruisers are air-conditioned. Looking down their noses at our little boat." Sheila sighed and finished plaintively, "Oh, George, why can't you make more money?"

He hadn't interpreted their salute in quite the same way, nor could he think of a suitable reply to her question; so he busied himself recoiling the ski towrope as though he hadn't heard. Not that her question really required an answer, as he'd discovered the many other times she had asked it.

They weren't exactly poor: a 15-foot Lyman with a 30-hp motor didn't come cheap and it just wasn't everyone in their set who had one, as Sheila had pointed out when she saw the ad in the classified section the previous fall. But neither was it a 35-foot cabin cruiser docked at the yacht club.

Once past the river mouth he speeded up and soon they were about a mile out. Here, away from the shore's pollution, they stopped. George handed her the life belt which, though somewhat worn—it had been part of the equipment purchased with the boat—was still quite trustworthy and unsinkable. No need to get a heavy jacket, they'd been told, the lightweight belt would be quite adequate for water skiing.

Even out here it was hot, with the sun's low rays caught and reflected a hundred times by each movement of the lake's surface. He felt a twinge of envy as Sheila slipped overboard into the cool water—but no more than a twinge for in the Hicks' household "ladies

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first" was the standing rule . . . and the idea stayed far down in the murky depths.

She adjusted the skis and he carefully played out the towrope. In a quiet that the motor hardly seemed to mar, George started west, with his wife skimming along a cool, remote fifty feet behind.

He watched her strong figure bend to the boat's sharp turn. She gracefully rode the outside curve where centrifugal force shot her to racecourse speed, but in recrossing the wake she miscalculated and he had to swing back to pick her up.

That was rare. Sheila had become a good water skier during the summer. Anything she did she did well. She hadn't known how to swim when they first got the boat but she'd taken lessons at the Y all winter and had become skilled. Not much stamina yet, but that would come—her determination would see to that.

"Your turn, George—that spill winded me."

In the back of the boat, misted by spray from the skis, he felt cool for the first time that day. This was the life! Remote from the world, from heat, from talk—Mercury with silver wings flashing.

Olympus crumbled as Sheila slowed the boat and signaled she was ready to ski again. With resignation he dropped the towline and floated until the boat drew alongside. As he pulled himself over the gunnel the buckle of the life belt caught with a slight ripping sound.

"Hurry, slowpoke, I'm boiling," she said impatiently. Then, "What's the matter?" as he continued to inspect the life belt instead of handing it to her.

"Nothing much. The buckle stitching is getting rotten and it ripped a little, but it's still safe. We'll just have to remember to take it up to the house for restitching before it tears any more."

"Well then, hand it over. I swear, George, you're the slowest man alive!"

Maybe that's when the idea was born.

If so, he quickly buried it.

Or maybe it was just a teaser-thought that didn't take full form until later, when the sun was down and they had been skiing by the last light held between sky and water.

Anyway, they were resting and having a soft drink from the cooler they kept on the boat when she started a petulant recital of her day's problems in the heat. The milkman had come early and hadn't knocked, so the milk had been sour when she went out to get it; the neighbor's cat was that way again and she'd had to chase toms out of the begonias three times, but not before they'd broken several plants; the drier had heated up the utility room something fierce and why couldn't they send the laundry out like the Reeds did? And somewhere in her monologue he thought, "Why, I have a whole lifetime of

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his ahead of me. At our ages that ould mean thirty or forty more ears."

The prospect made him shiver nd at just that instant the idea merged—and took command.

Quickly he slid overboard.

"George, how rude of you—I vas just going to tell you what Grace said when I asked them over or a cookout next Saturday night."

"Yes, dear," said George, fastening the skis awkwardly because of he bottle opener still clutched in ne hand.

Though difficult, it was not impossible for him to hook one elbow hrough the towrope handle while e sawed at the worn threads of the fe-belt buckle with the sharp point f the bottle opener. When inevitaly he toppled over, the floating me was just enough to finish the ob. It still held together, but bare-. Any sudden strain would finish ipping the fastener loose, yet at a asual glance its weakened condion was not apparent.

Perfect, he thought.

The timing was perfect too, for ow only the last fingers of light rasped the sky. An evening breeze ad risen, as it often does at nightall on a large body of water. It ruffed the formerly placid water—not rong enough yet for whitecaps, ut definitely choppy.

The lake was nearly clear of small raft—the few remaining were far way and headed for shore. Farther ut there was a steady, evenly spaced row of lights gleaming in the dusk. To the uninitiated they could have been a fleet of boats but George knew they were only carbide lamps on the buoys used to mark and steady large fishing nets. A fisherman had set them and left while George and Sheila had been drinking the soda pop.

There was no flaw in the plan which had sprung full-blown into his brain. It was simple, foolproof, and perfect. He could be accused later of rash overenthusiasm, nothing more. Her insurance was a minimum amount; she had no estate of her own; and as everyone knew, theirs was a happy marriage.

Tossing the life belt to Sheila, he took the tiller again.

"It's time to be heading in. We're getting low on gas and it's late but you can have one last fling on the way in."

"But, George, do you think it's safe this late? Look, there's lightening and we're sure to get that storm the paper promised."

"Yeh," he replied casually, "but it's a long way off and we're heading for home. If it gets too choppy or you get tired, just signal and I'll pull you in."

She looked dubious but she agreed. Ironic, he thought, that she should agree with me now when she so rarely does at home.

His breathing quickened a bit, but not much. By nature he was a calm, even-dispositioned man and this was so right, so inevitable, that

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now he couldn't understand why he hadn't thought of it before. He glanced back at his wife. She was riding the choppy water well but by the end of an evening's skiing she would tire quickly.

He turned the boat sharply in the direction of Canada but she crossed the wake without apparent effort and, when he looked back, she waved gaily.

The third sharp turn did it.

Slowly, almost lazily, he circled back. He must make this look good in case anyone happened to be watching from shore; besides, he wanted to be sure the buckle had really parted.

The life belt came into view first —a bright orange snake writhing in black water. Some fifteen feet farther on, his wife's bathing cap was barely visible between rising waves. That dark-blue cap made his story even better; it really was almost impossible to see her. If she screamed, the sound was lost in the slap, slap of the waves and the throttled purr of the motor.

Carefully he circled again and again in an ever-wider arc; then, because the gas really was low, he headed toward the yacht club. Logically, his only hope to find her would be to summon larger boats with searchlights.

Behind him now there was nothing to be seen but an occasional whitecap riled by the angry wind, the bobbing lights of the fishing buoys, and a periodic streak of lightning to the west. All else was darkness.

The people at the yacht club were eager to help, as he'd been sure they would be. Not snobbish or haughty at all, but simply men helping a fellow man in trouble.

They called the Coast Guard station and gave his description of the spot where Sheila was lost; then they launched some of their own larger boats to help with the search. And they said cheerfully, of course she'd be found—the life belt she was wearing would keep her afloat. But their optimism sounded a little forced to George. After all, by the time they were opposite Huntington she'd been lost more than half an hour and the storm had broken.

As coffee sitirred in a saucer sloshes over when the same movement hardly ripples its surface in a cup, so Lake Erie, shallowest of the Great Lakes, responds to the wind with waves that would do credit to the Atlantic. If there'd been any doubts in his mind, the fury of the storm dispelled them. No swimmer could survive the crashing force of these waves.

Small craft warnings were up and the distinction between air and lake was obscured by the driving rain; but the searchers stayed on valiantly until the Coast Guard ordered them back to shore.

A nervous reaction set in and it wasn't hard for George to appear stunned by his wife's death. Some of the men were concerned and

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wanted to drive him home. He refused. They'd understand, he was sure, that he'd rather be alone just now. Sure, they said, they understood, and if there was anything they could do . . .

He drove almost gaily through the cooling rain. Funny what a change in temperature could do to his mood. He still had a week of vacation left—he'd go over into Pennsylvania when the season opened and do some hunting, maybe even take an extra week—they'd understand at the office. He used to enjoy hunting before he was married—not the hunting itself so much as the solitude of the woods; but Sheila never cared for it—she'd rather be where there were people and excitement. Poor Sheila.

He swung into the drive and was surprised to see a light in the living-room. The Coast Guard must have called Roy next door; he'd given Roy's phone number in case there was more information before George got home. Sure, that was it—they'd found her body and Roy had come over to break the news.

A torrent of words greeted him at the door.

"George, where in the world have you been? I thought you'd run out of gas and been swamped. Now that would have been just grand! Here I nearly drowned—would have, too, if it hadn't been for that storm. When that damn belt came loose I thought I was gone and then you—George, you simply must have your eyes tested! I'll make an appointment tomorrow—but I got hold of that belt and used it like water wings to get to one of the buoys—I remembered what you once said about panic being a swimmer's worst enemy. And then that fisherman came back right away to get his nets—said he didn't want them torn up—so you see the storm really did save me.

"George, what is the matter? You're white as a ghost. Heavens, you'd think *you* were the one nearly drowned instead of me! Sit down—no, not on that good chair, you're all wet—and I'll get you a glass of brandy."

"Yes, dear," said George.

MEMO: *To All EQ Fans—*

You'll want to pick up the October issue of "Official Detective Stories". Why? Because our own Ellery Queen appears therein, telling the fact-detective story of the pirates of Key West, the theft of the cruiser Honeira, and murder of the high seas. On sale August 30th. Make a note on your memo pad.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	NICHOLAS DIMINNO
TITLE:	*Case of the Lovable Taxidermist*
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	A lieutenant of police
LOCALE:	Green Valley, United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*The kind of murder case that could happen in real life, and the kind of detective who would investigate it—no miracle worker, no mastermind, but a quietly persistent and intelligent cop . . .*

IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THAT could ruin his day it was to hear that a man hadn't an enemy in the world. Not that he was an ogre. He was just a simple detective lieutenant waiting out the years until retirement, and when people who were murdered had nothing but friends it made things complicated.

He thought that now as Rooney, his driver, turned off at the station and headed for the suburb where the latest lovable man had resided. He supposed he shouldn't feel so bitter about it; what annoyed him in these cases was the way the relatives seemed to dare him to find someone who would kill their favorite, and when he did, which wasn't always, he felt that he had disillusioned them.

Of course, a lieutenant of police had no right thinking these things. It made a hard job even harder, and he had often warned the younger men to be like automatons in certain areas. The trouble with the younger men was, they were automatons in all the wrong areas . . .

They were passing the Town Hall of the village now, a neat white-washed colonial structure that had obviously been copied from New England. Ahead were the winding lanes with their gaily colored houses, pastel green, blue, yellow, and some other shades the

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Lieutenant wasn't artist enough to identify.

"A real picture village, eh, Lieutenant?" said Rooney.

He grunted. He was thinking of the man who hadn't an enemy in the world and all the shoe leather he'd use to find the one who'd killed him. If he ever did. He'd learned long ago to expect nothing—not a great deal anyway—and never to get excited. That was the only way to knock off thirty years in this game. He had friends who poured themselves into the job and now they were wrecks.

Rooney was curving the car skillfully into one lane and out another, past the bright roofs and picket fences and untended bicycles, coming to a stop at last before a slate-gray house with green shutters. There were only a few ladies clustered outside; that was the suburbs, thought the Lieutenant approvingly. Everybody minded their own business, he thought as he shouldered past the curious women. Now if this had been the city there'd be a crowd from here to . . .

A policeman answered the bell. He was a member of the local force and saluted the way he'd seen them do in the movies. In sign language the Lieutenant asked where the widow was and in sign language the policeman answered. They stood in the foyer and in a low gravelly voice the policeman told him what had happened. Arthur Hopkins had come home from his work in the city and was walking up the lawn when someone had fired at him. Hopkins had died instantly.

The policeman had questioned some of the people in the houses on either side, and so had his sergeant, who'd just left; but none of the neighbors had seen anything.

"Those people out there," the Lieutenant indicated the curious idlers. "You talk to them?"

"Yeah, they don't know anything either. Just that Hopkins was a nice old guy. Wife's nice too. They had a daughter who's married, she's nice too."

"That's nice," the Lieutenant said. It seemed the only thing to say.

He found the widow in a back room off the hall, half sitting, half lying on a half couch, half chair. This modern furniture, he thought. Introducing himself, he asked if they might have just a short chat. He knew she was upset, she had every right to be, but he would make it brief. Perhaps later, when she felt up to it, they might have a longer talk.

Mrs. Hopkins, an attractive woman in her early fifties, got up and led the way into the living room. She looked really grieved—not the noisy, tear-the-hair kind, but the deeper, quieter kind. She was stunned, but her lifelong breeding prevented her from showing it. That was his theory.

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He asked for her version of the incident.

"Incident?" she said dully.

"Your husband's death," he said, thinking it was no use being delicate if they wouldn't cooperate.

She told him pretty much what the patrolman outside had said. Her husband had come home from his shop in the city and was walking up the lawn when he was shot at. She'd rushed out immediately but he died before he could tell her who had shot him. No, she'd seen no one, and it had been seconds, mere seconds, after the shot.

"Who would want to kill your husband?" he said.

She stared at him. "No one."

"He had no enemies?"

"Not an enemy in the world."

"Are you sure, Mrs. Hopkins? In the space of—how old was your husband?"

"He would have been sixty next week. We planned a—a party." She dropped her head and began to sob.

"In the space of sixty years a man makes a few—well, not enemies necessarily, but a few antagonisms. Even the nicest people do. I know a man, wouldn't harm a fly, everyone loved him, yet one day . . ." He rambled on mechanically, then his voice died out as her head came up and she stared in a way that said: that wasn't the way it was with Arthur.

"You have a married daughter?"

"Yes. She's over there."

In that split second he thought he was losing his grip. Had he been in a room all this time and not even noticed a third person? His head swung quickly and then he relaxed. It was only a photograph.

"Charming. Who's she married to?"

"Fred Porter. They live in the city. Lovely apartment."

"How did Fred Porter get along with your husband?"

"Wonderfully. They were like father and son."

"No friction of any kind?"

"Never."

It was that way right through. Everybody in the house was sprouting wings. He asked about other relatives. There was a cousin in Ohio, an uncle in California, a niece in Florida. They all loved Arthur. A maid who came in Mondays and Wednesdays also loved Arthur—in the proper way, of course. If they'd had a turtle, it too would have loved Arthur, thought the Lieutenant.

He got some facts on the dead man's life and habits, and his jaw dropped when he heard that Hopkins had been a taxidermist. Who in the world would get mad at a taxidermist?

The phone rang. He answered and it was the local sergeant. He'd had an idea the Lieutenant would be there and he thought he'd call . . . yes, yes, the Lieutenant said rather impatiently. What did he have? The sergeant said he'd worked with the coroner and ballis-

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tics man and was sure of several things. First, Hopkins had been killed by a 30-30 steel-jacketed bullet which, from the angle it hit him, must have been fired from that thicket that is cater-cornered to the house.

The Lieutenant hadn't noticed the thicket, and the sergeant said sure, just look out the window. They were going to build several homes there in the fall. A perfect spot for the murderer, who had then run off through the underbrush to come out on a lane far down the road.

Which lane? asked the Lieutenant. Any one of three or four, said the sergeant. That was the trouble with these damn suburbs—there was no rhyme nor reason to them. The Lieutenant didn't want the sergeant's philosophy on suburbs and asked about the murdered man. Hopkins was a quiet guy who kept to himself. What did he live for? inquired the Lieutenant, lowering his voice and turning his back on the widow. His taxidermy shop and visits from his daughter and son-in-law. They agreed that Hopkins hadn't demanded much out of life, and the Lieutenant told the sergeant to collect his reports and have them available. He would take over from there.

"Mrs. Hopkins," he said, turning back to her, "I understand that your husband was shot by a rifle bullet. Sounds like the sort of big-game stuff that would tie in with your husband's taxidermy. Any chance he might have messed up a skin, say? You know, ruined a pelt or something, and some loon who'd spent six months shooting it went off his head to think it was ruined for his den and decided on revenge?"

He had put it crudely, he knew, but not crudely enough to warrant the cold look he got from Mrs. Hopkins.

"My husband never in his life messed up a skin, as you put it, Lieutenant. He was very respected in his profession."

The Lieutenant saw that all he would get out of this interview was more praise of Arthur Hopkins. He'd already had enough. The thing to do now was to question people who hadn't looked at Arthur through rose-colored glasses. He hoped to heaven there were a few.

He asked when he could see her daughter and son-in-law. Mrs. Hopkins hadn't any idea. Her daughter was at the hospital having a baby and hadn't been told about this. Fred Porter was probably there too.

The Lieutenant made a mental note to give them a few hours to get the baby out of the way. Murmuring his regrets, he went softly to the door, but when he got there he couldn't help asking wistfully, "You're sure *no one* might have disliked him? In sixty years?"

"He didn't have an enemy in the world," she said firmly. "Not one."

"My congratulations and con-

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dolences," he said under his breath as he stepped out on the lawn. Rooney was questioning the idlers and seemed to have gained their confidence—at least, they were all laughing together. That was Rooney, tending to overdo things. In his zeal to ingratiate himself with possible witnesses he tended to lose perspective. Laughing in front of the house of a man who'd been murdered! This new generation of cop lacked a sense of the fitness of things. The Lieutenant sighed: a philosopher already and still so far from retirement.

As he got in the car and Rooney came around to the driver's seat the Lieutenant said, "You got all their names?"

"Yep."

"What did they say?"

"That they don't want to get involved."

Just acting like citizens, the Lieutenant thought. Did they say anything else?

"That this Hopkins was a prince. He kept his television low at night and always gave their kids money when they came on the Brownie drive. Stuff like that."

The car was starting when the Lieutenant remembered something. He told Rooney to stop, then got out and went across the street. There was the thicket, extending far back from the road. A perfect spot for a sniper who could sit there, practically invisible, and wait for his target to drive up.

He told Rooney to bring the car around on the far side, wherever that was, and the Lieutenant plunged into the woods. It was heavy going, with thorns and brambled, whipping branches, and soft oozy puddles. It hadn't been such a good idea, he thought as he scrambled and crawled, but what else could he do? He might have sent Rooney in, of course, but he didn't have great faith in Rooney's powers of observation.

At last, disheveled and limping, he broke through a tangle of bushes and reached asphalt again. As he'd expected, Rooney wasn't in sight but the Lieutenant couldn't blame him. There was more than one exit from this place—there were three or four at least. The murderer could have chosen any one of them, and if his car were parked near the thicket it was very possible no one had seen his face. The car would have shielded him from people on the far side of the road.

The Lieutenant walked along the winding lane, drawing a few sharp looks from matrons who were hanging out wash to dry. He guessed he did look like a tramp, and he was relieved when Rooney finally rolled up with the car.

"I thought you'd come out the other side," were Rooney's first words as he threw the door open.

"I thought you'd think that," the Lieutenant said, getting in.

He told Rooney to drive to the local station where he'd like to get

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cleaned up. He looked and felt like a Boy Scout who'd been after a camp-craft badge, and he could use some hot coffee.

At the station he got together with the sergeant, an eager beaver who'd already typed up the reports and was anxious to move in several directions. The Lieutenant had a hard time slowing him down. He'd known bloodhounds like this fellow before—bulls in a china shop who accomplished a lot, not the least of which was scaring half the town. The murderer would hear the sergeant coming a mile away.

The reports verified what he already knew; but gave no hint of a possible motive. He could think of a few—let's see now. Hopkins might have messed up a skin, as he'd put it to the widow—some nut who'd sat up in a shooting box in the pouring rain for five nights in succession for a shot at that tiger would be just the nut to lie in ambush on Dandelion Road. He'd have to learn something about taxidermy, the Lieutenant thought gloomily. And damn it, he couldn't think of anything duller. He had a feeling he was going to see a lot of stuffed owls in the days ahead.

Maybe he ought to check out other motives. Perhaps Hopkins was carrying on with some woman in town whose husband or boy friend disapproved. Late love could come to a taxidermist—why not? The widow was attractive and while that didn't necessarily mean Hopkins was handsome, it meant he had something. And maybe some little manicurist had noticed too. He made a note to check Hopkins' comings and goings with the various people who were likely to know—newsboys, train conductors, shopkeepers, the cop on the beat.

Since he was in the neighborhood he made for the Country Club first. The Hopkinses had joined recently, on the urging of their daughter who thought it was a shame they weren't making themselves part of the community. That, at least, was the opinion of Foster Troop, the club manager. He understood that Mr. Hopkins—wonderful man, terrible shame—was wrapped up in his work and hadn't ever given himself time to live, while his wife—wonderful woman, poor thing—lived for her flowers. They hadn't really needed the club, but their daughter had prodded, so they had joined. Of course, the Blue Hills Country Club had been delighted. The Hopkinses were quiet people—not joiners, but you could see they were quality. He must put Mr. Hopkins' name on the bulletin board so that fellow members could pay their respects.

"Of course you don't have gambling here?" said the Lieutenant.

Foster Troop didn't look shocked and the Lieutenant was grateful in a small way.

"It is made clear to new members that gambling is cause for expulsion from the club."

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"Had any expulsions?'

"None."

"Hopkins make any enemies here? Any arguments about politics in the lounge or out on the golf course?"

"He never stayed in the lounge. Never played golf."

"Just what did he do?"

"Came here for dinner once in a while. To a dance once. With Mrs. Hopkins," he added as the Lieutenant was about to speak. "He struck me on all occasions as a friendly, easy-going gentleman. Why anyone would want to kill him—"

"No one *here*?" emphasized the Lieutenant. "You're sure of that?"

"Positive, Lieutenant. There are no hot bloods at Blue Hills. They're past that age."

"Oh, is there an age limit for being hot-blooded?"

The manager smiled. "Isn't there?"

"I wish there were, Mr. Troop. It would make my job much simpler. By the way, do you have a rifle group in the club?"

"Hunting, you mean?"

"That, or just a bunch of people interested in guns."

"No, nothing like that."

"Ever see anyone here with a rifle?"

The manager shook his head.

Did Hopkins sit on any board that decided on applicants? No, Hopkins held no office of responsibility here. All he did was dine on a Saturday or two and attend that one dance. Certainly Foster Troop could give the Lieutenant the name of Hopkins' sponsor and the one or two others who might have had occasion to meet him in the dining room, but beyond that he could be of no help. The Lieutenant took the names and went out on the porch.

He'd like to join a country club some day—when he retired maybe. But maybe not; old bores would corner him in the library when they found out he'd been a cop and ask about his exciting cases and he'd have to lie. There weren't any exciting cases—they were all miserable drudgery. The only detectives who had fun were the ones on television.

As they drove toward the city, Rooney filled him in on a couple of things he'd forgotten to mention. Arthur Hopkins had had an argument one morning with the garbageman. Not exactly an argument, but Arthur Hopkins had asked if the man couldn't be a little quieter and the garbageman said was it his fault the trash cans weren't made of rubber? The lady in the aquamarine house next door had heard it all—not that she thought it meant anything. Everyone on the block had had similar dialogue with the garbageman at one time or another.

Tiredly the Lieutenant included the garbageman in the list of people to be questioned. Was there anything else?

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"Once he came home with a wolf. They thought that was unusual."

"A dead wolf?"

"They didn't say."

"He was a taxidermist," explained the Lieutenant.

"That so? They didn't know his line. Kept to himself. Wife too."

He was getting worried now. Damn it, it looked like the man *didn't* have an enemy in the world. It meant that after back-breaking work for a week, a month, he'd have to drop one more case into the Unsolved File and carry it around in his mind until he had some flashy success that pushed it out. Flashy success, he thought, his lip curling. The only time he'd had a flashy success was when he was heading into the drug store for cigarettes just as a sneak thief was running out. They'd bumped into each other, and lucky for him the thief had had the wind knocked out of him, or he'd have got up and scampered away. Lucky too the owner had come out yelling and he'd caught on after a while and dived for the thief's ankle. He had a scroll home to show for it. He never hung it up though; people had a way of asking for the story behind it.

Back in his office the Lieutenant sent out two men to check on Hopkins' routine. He wanted a breakdown on the man's comings and goings. Did he leave his shop at a certain time for lunch? A certain time for home? Did he go straight home from the station? They were to check his activities yesterday, also his bank account, insurance, and so forth. The sergeant out at Green Valley would give them the leads.

The Lieutenant himself was about to pound on a lot of closed doors and the chances were slim that even one would open and show a little light. On television they all swung open with a blaze of light—in half an hour yet. He wondered what he had against television. Maybe it was because he kept comparing his results with those of the TV private eye's. Even his wife was coming to believe in TV private eyes—and that reminded him it was time to phone his wife; it had been time long ago, he thought guiltily.

She wasn't angry when he told her he'd be late, though they'd spent a good part of the previous evening planning what tonight's dinner would be. She said she just hoped he didn't think he was the entire police department. No, he said, he definitely did not think he was the entire department. Of that he was sure, though he was less sure just when he'd be home. She said she just wanted him to know she wasn't going to save the roast, that she was going to eat every bit of it herself. He hung up and reflected that he was a lucky man. There was one lieutenant's wife who cried every time her husband called her on the phone. Her

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own fault. Shouldn't have let the man fill out an application.

When he rang up Fred Porter's home there was no answer and he assumed the young man was still at the hospital. On the way over he tried not to think about the case, because at this stage it was just a tangle of threads that led nowhere. Perhaps in a day or two they would all fall into place, though he doubted it. In the meantime he must keep on the go, hurry here, hurry there; it was the only way to suppress the nagging feeling that he was misspending the taxpayers' money.

Rooney was giving his theory of the case as he drove. From what he had pieced together from the neighbors he was inclined to think . . . The Lieutenant listened fitfully. Rooney's idea might be a good one and they'd get to it eventually —when they were scraping bottom. But he didn't want to think about it now, not until he'd seen Porter and that other fellow.

He found Fred Porter without trouble. It had to be this slender taut young man who was seated on the cold wooden bench chain-smoking cigarettes. His eyes were shadowed and his tie rumpled and he looked as if he'd been there a long time.

"You too?" he said as the Lieutenant sat beside him.

"What? Oh, no." Still the Lieutenant was flattered; he was quite a bit past the age for fatherhood. He warned himself to go easy on Porter on that account.

"I've come to ask you a few questions about your late father-in-law," he said, showing his credentials briefly. "You know he's dead, of course."

"I heard last night. My mother-in-law reached me here. Told me to make sure Patricia didn't find out. Not now, anyway. Patricia loved the old man."

"How'd you find him?"

"Pure gold."

The Lieutenant winced. This Hopkins couldn't be as saintly as all that! He'd just covered his tracks better than other men.

"Mr. Porter, I'm prepared to admit that your father-in-law led a very tidy life, and that it's unthinkable any of the hundreds of people he met would want to harm him. But surely there's more to him than that? Did he ever lose his temper? Fail at business? Have a rival in *any* of the thousand and one things people have rivals in?"

"Eh? What's that?" Porter was staring at the door marked *Do Not Enter*. He hadn't been listening.

"Your wife been in there long?"

"Since nine this morning."

The Lieutenant clicked his tongue. "Well, you surely don't feel like answering questions now."

"I don't," said Porter. "Besides all I know of the old man you could put in a thimble. He wasn't very talkative."

A shame, thought the Lieuten

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ant. It was the talkers you could do something with. He studied Fred Porter out of the corner of his eye. What business was he in? Was he successful? Had he engineered the death of his father-in-law to get his hands on some money? The Lieutenant hadn't the faintest idea if one made money in the taxidermy line, but if Hopkins had been at it all his life he should have more to show for it than stuffed owls.

He stood up and clapped Porter on the back. "If you think of anything call me, will you?"

Porter stared at the card the Lieutenant handed him. "In what connection?"

"Your late father-in-law."

Porter obviously hadn't had much sleep. It seemed ages before he nodded and said, "My late father-in-law. Yes."

"I'll be back," said the Lieutenant.

He went out and was hardly settled in the car before Rooney began on the second phase of his theory. He favored a dragnet of some kind—for what purpose wasn't clear—and the Lieutenant wished he would shut up. Although he had promised himself once that he would listen to Rooney's theories—they couldn't be worse than his own. But this wasn't the time. He wondered if his two men were turning up anything at the bank and the insurance office.

Mr. James Fortman was the big man on his list. Not only was James Fortman the sponsor of the Hopkinses at the Blue Hills Country Club, he was by all odds the closest thing to a friend that the shy and mysterious Mr. Hopkins had had. Not that Hopkins had really been mysterious; he'd just had less than his share of human weaknesses, and that made him kind of eerie in a way. Give him a man who lived life fully, thought the Lieutenant. then when something happened to him the police had any number of places to go. But these well regulated citizens who hurried from home to work, from work to home, always minding their own business —the police should be delivered from their kind.

The Lieutenant had hopes with Mr. Fortman. Not only was he a friend of the deceased, he was a fellow taxidermist. It was an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone—to learn about Hopkins' intimate life and the ways of taxidermy.

Fortman was trying to get a fox to look angry when the Lieutenant walked in the shop. It was a ticklish business, for the fox persisted in looking slack, and the Lieutenant waited patiently as Fortman worked. At length, he cursed the fox for being uncooperative and turned to his visitor.

"You're the mountain goat," he said and started for the back of the shop.

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"I am not the mountain goat," the Lieutenant said hurriedly, producing his credentials.

"Oh." Fortman sat down, wiping his hands. He was a husky, bearded man in a turtle-neck sweater. "You've come about Arthur."

"Yes. When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday afternoon. We chatted about this and that."

"Did he seem disturbed?"

"Arthur was never disturbed."

"How was his business?"

Fortman shrugged. "Same as mine. Up and down. A zoo order now and then. A fish today, a bird tomorrow. That's taxidermy."

"He felt no financial pressure?"

"No. He's done well over the years." Fortman took out a pipe and studied it narrowly. "I wish you'd tell me what you're thinking. I may be able to help."

The Lieutenant liked that attitude. There was no nonsense about this man. The way he'd cursed the fox, for instance.

"I'll think out loud a bit. Why is a man of Hopkin's reputation gunned down from ambush one night? Can it possibly be that he had hired someone to do the job? —for insurance, say, to go to his wife and daughter?"

"Arthur?" Fortman laughed shortly. "Not likely."

"Mr. Fortman, any number of things that are not likely *have* happened."

"No, not Arthur," Fortman said firmly. "He was too considerate of others to put them to grief this way. As for insurance, he had only a small amount—he told me so himself."

This was leading nowhere, and would continue to lead nowhere until he had some facts on Hopkins' financial affairs. He'd better put that aside for now.

"You proposed him for membership in the Blue Hills Club?"

"I did."

"Was he keen on the idea?"

"Hated it," Fortman said. "But his daughter thought it was a shame to live in the suburbs and not be part of suburban life."

"You live in the suburbs?"

"Yes, a mile or so away from the Hopkins'."

"Had you ever been in competition with Hopkins?"

Fortman surveyed him calmly. "For what?"

"A zoo order." The words rolled smoothly off his tongue.

Fortman laughed. "No, it doesn't work like that."

Was Mrs. Hopkins involved, the Lieutenant wondered. This Fortman was a handsome fellow. Virile. Had a beard anyway.

"You've known him and his wife long?"

"Twenty years."

"See a good deal of them?"

"I see her more than I see him."

Oh, do you, thought the Lieutenant.

"How's that?"

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"Well, Arthur had a way of being occupied in that cellar workroom of his—just continuing his day's work, really—and every so often his wife would drive over to my place and we'd have a drink."

"You're married?"

"Single."

The word echoed in the silence. The Lieutenant coughed, and Fortman sat up suddenly.

"Now wait a minute! If you're thinking what I think you're thinking . . ."

"Yes?" the Lieutenant pressed.

"You're wrong! I was fond of both of them. There was no romance or anything like that."

"How often did she come over to your place?"

"Once a week."

"Was she lonely? Was that it?"

Fortman said heatedly, "I didn't say she was lonely. Arthur would stay cooped up in that cellar room and every so often she'd drop over and we'd play some records I had."

The Lieutenant glanced around the shop at the birds, fish, and deer and thought of Fortman and Mrs. Hopkins. Fortman and Mrs. Hopkins. Why not? It was the only thing that made sense so far.

"The Hopkinses, how long have they lived out there?"

"Only a year."

"What made them pick that particular place?"

"I'm afraid I persuaded them. I liked it and I thought they'd like it too."

"There was no thought that you and Mrs. Hopkins would have more opportunities to play records while Arthur was working in the cellar?"

"No!" blazed Fortman. "There was no thought of that."

"Really?" chided the Lieutenant. "*I* might think of it. Charming woman with time on her hands while Arthur puts finishing touches on a moose downstairs. I might think of it."

"My moral standards are higher than yours," Fortman said icily.

The Lieutenant grimaced. He deserved that.

"You're sure you saw her just once a week? It might make us wonder if we found out that it had been more often, that it wasn't limited to times Arthur was down the cellar—"

"Find out and be damned!" cried Fortman. "She's pleasant company and that's all there is to it."

"What's a single man doing out in the suburbs?" the Lieutenant asked.

"I didn't live in the village of Green Valley," Fortman said. "I have an old house by the shore. I've had it for years."

He was sullen now, and the Lieutenant couldn't blame him. Fortman answered in monosyllables when asked to give the names of some people in taxidermy who could fill in Hopkins' background. He denied sulkily that there was a

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chance anyone in that line had killed him. It wasn't loyalty to the profession, it was just that nothing worth killing for was involved. He invited the Lieutenant to look around his shop at the dusty fish and fowl. Did he see anything there that a person might kill someone for?

"Have any arguments with Hopkins?"

"Of course I did. I've known him for twenty years."

"About what? Mrs. Hopkins?"

"Not Mrs. Hopkins," said Fortman precisely. "About his low estimates on zoo orders. He was hurting things for the rest of us."

"I see. He'd do a zebra for very little, eh?"

"Arthur let himself be taken advantage of."

"Wasn't that sufficient reason to do something about Arthur? To keep prices up?"

"Anything was a reason, Lieutenant." Fortman showed his teeth. "The fact is, we liked him, all of us. He was a decent fellow. You don't kill decent fellows."

You'd be surprised, thought the Lieutenant. "You own a rifle?"

"No."

The Lieutenant's eyes ranged over the corners of the shop. "But I imagine the hunters who bring their stuff in leave their rifles now and then? To be picked up later?"

"Sometimes."

"Did you have a rifle lying around yesterday?"

"Lieutenant, I will say it only once more," said Fortman. "I did not kill Arthur Hopkins with a rifle, club, or slingshot. He was my friend. I was not carrying on an affair with his wife. I haven't the slightest idea who might have wanted to kill him. Now may I get back to my work?"

He got up and went to the fox, whose mouth had gone slack again. The Lieutenant studied his broad back in silence. He knew he had pressed too hard with him, had fired accusations and insinuations that were unfair; his mounting sense of helplessness was the cause of it, the gnawing feeling that the case was at a dead end. Oh, there was hope the men who were checking Hopkins' life and habits might turn up something, but it might be impossible to connect any of that with the man who'd fired at him from woods opposite the house. Already he saw one more case filed away, another reminder of failure, another albatross.

"What about Fred Porter?" he said. "Anything I should know about him?"

"Seems a harmless fellow," said Fortman, working busily. "I wouldn't waste my time there, if I were you."

"And just where would you waste your time?"

"I'd check mental hospitals to see if any psychotics escaped in the last day or two. Or maybe some

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teenager practicing marksmanship."

The Lieutenant sighed. He left the shop and had Rooney make a tour of the three or four taxidermists whom Fortman had mentioned. They agreed that Hopkins had been a likable man and that he had a habit of taking jobs more for the challenge than the money. That was all right—they felt that way too—but they had wives and children to support. But they all insisted it was too small a thing for murder.

Fortman? The Lieutenant shouldn't let the beard fool him. Fortman was just like the rest of them, which the Lieutenant took to mean skilled, conscientious—and incapable of murder.

Back in the car he stared at his meager notes. They led nowhere. Half a day's work merely established that the deceased didn't have an enemy in the world. But somewhere there must be a clue; somewhere in life Arthur Hopkins must have slipped up, made a mistake, injured somebody. He hoped it wasn't too far back.

"How's it coming, Lieutenant?" asked Rooney.

"When I'm ready to issue a progress report I'll issue it," he snapped, and Rooney knew then that it wasn't coming. "Drive back to the station. Maybe they've turned up something."

That, he thought, was the clincher. When he said a thing like that, it meant the case was virtually dead. Because they hardly ever turned up anything. Oh, they brought back bales and bales of stuff, but barely anything he could use. Beside him Rooney was whistling silently and the Lieutenant thought it was a good thing Rooney couldn't read minds. Then Rooney said something and he just caught the tail end of it.

"What did you say?"

"I said I'd hate to come home drunk some night to Green Valley. Y'know, the way it's laid out. Architect must've been nuts."

The Lieutenant closed his eyes and thought about it. He saw the slate-gray and green and aquamarine houses and the winding lanes and the white picket fences. It was a maze, all right.

"Step on it," he said suddenly.

"Where?"

"Dandelion Road."

Rooney stepped on the gas and they lurched forward. It was a possibility, the Lieutenant was thinking as the telephone poles began to flash by. If he found what he was thinking of, they were in business.

He drummed on the armrest, and Rooney, sensing that this was no time for conversation, applied himself to driving. He drove skillfully—everyone had to have something he could do well, thought the Lieutenant—and in less than half an hour they were passing the whitewashed steeple of the Town Hall. Rooney slowed down.

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"What are you doing?" said the Lieutenant.

"Just getting my bearings."

"The hell with your bearings. Just drive."

Giving it the gas, Rooney reflected that his boss was getting as cranky as an old maid.

Soon they were curving around the twisting lanes, passing a bewildering variety of pastel-colored houses, now blue, now green, now yellow. The Lieutenant was sitting forward in his seat, tense, and Rooney knew better than to complain that this development must have been laid out by a Chinese puzzle-maker. He lowered his head and drove.

"Y'know, Lieutenant, I think maybe I took a wrong turn back there—"

"Good. Keep going."

Well, if he's out for an excursion, thought Rooney, that suits me. He was about to give it the gas again when he spied the slate-gray house up ahead, and beside it the yellow. He brought the car around in a slow arc and came to a stop before the house.

"Where are we?" the Lieutenant snapped.

"Dandelion Road. What you wanted."

"This isn't Dandelion Road," the Lieutenant said with suppressed excitement.

"What? The gray house, and the yellow one next to it, and across the street—look, those woods. And next to it, a green house." Rooney had never spoken with such authority.

The Lieutenant's head was turning this way and that. 'You're right, Rooney. A gray house next to a yellow house, and across the street the woods, and next to them a green house. *But this isn't Dandelion Road!* It's Whippoorwill Lane. Look at this sign."

Rooney looked up the street and said, "I'll be damned."

"We're much farther into the development this time. But notice the way that house is right at the end of the street—just like the one on Dandelion. And the way the road crosses in front of it—just like on Dandelion."

"You don't have to be drunk to make a mistake in this burg."

"The same color, same everything," mused the Lieutenant.

"The architect didn't have a helluva lot of imagination, did he? Just kept repeating himself," said Rooney, who was taking it as a personal insult that he had driven to the wrong address.

"There may be others like this scattered through the development," the Lieutenant said. "But let's try this one. A car's in the driveway. Maybe the man of the house is home."

He got out of the car and satisfied himself that the house was just like the one on Dandelion Road. It was, uncannily. You'd think the builders had gone out of their way

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to duplicate it, even to the woods.

He started up the walk and suddenly a voice broke the stillness. "Stop or I'll shoot."

It was a high-pitched quavering voice but there was no doubt about what it said. The Lieutenant stopped immediately.

"Go back where you came from."

He could make out what looked like a pistol barrel leveled at him from behind the house. He opened his mouth, knowing that he might be saying exactly the wrong thing and get a bullet in his chest, but he had to say it. "I'm from the police."

"Get back in that car."

The voice had risen now, risen dangerously, and the pistol barrel moved. Whoever was behind it was under great tension and the Lieutenant remained motionless. No use getting him even more nervous. He hoped that Rooney was minding his own business back in the car; it would be just like that big lug to barge in now and start fireworks.

"Let me talk to you," he said quickly. "Just a few words."

"Are you getting off my lawn or am I going to shoot?"

"Look, I'll show you my badge."

"Anybody can buy a badge."

"Not this badge. Just let me reach in my pocket—"

"Reach in your pocket and I'll shoot."

This was getting ridiculous. His palms were itching to do something, but the Police Manual didn't cover this one. He began to back away when suddenly he heard a gasp and a scuffle. The pistol barrel vanished and he ran forward.

As he came around the corner of the house he almost tripped over a man in a sports shirt who was on his knees in the grass. Standing over him, with a knee in his back, was Rooney; he was holding the pistol negligently and trying not to look too smug.

"Let him up," the Lieutenant said.

"He almost drilled you, Lieutenant."

"Let him up."

Rooney reached down reluctantly and half pulled, half jerked the man to his feet. He was a stocky man in his forties, his face pale, almost white, his eyes round and staring.

"You're the police?" he stammered.

"That's what I was trying to get across in my broken English."

"How did I know?" mumbled the man, taking out a handkerchief and beginning to mop his brow. He was shivering, and the Lieutenant, who had slowly been working himself into indignation as he realized what a close call he'd had, decided to go easy. This was a badly frightened man. Playing it tough wouldn't get him anywhere.

"Is this the ordinary behavior of householders in Green Valley?" he said jocularly. "I can see that

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salesmen take their lives in their hands—"

Unaccountably the man covered his face with his hands and began to weep. Dry, racking sobs shook his shoulders, and the Lieutenant waited. Rooney looked away. It gave him the creeps. Give him a good fight and he was happy; but this—a grown man acting like this. The Lieutenant waved him back to the car and Rooney left gladly.

The Lieutenant waited until the man's shoulders quieted down and then he said gently, "Can we go inside and talk?"

The man turned and led the way through the screen door and into the kitchen. He sat down at the table and buried his head in his fists. The Lieutenant waited what seemed a long time. Then he said, "Who were you expecting?"

The man's voice was muffled. "Nobody," he said.

"You stand behind the house with a gun every day?"

"I was jumpy."

"Why?"

The man buried himself deeper in his fists and the Lieutenant began to get impatient. He'd almost got his head shot off and now this guy was trying to palm him off with a fairy tale.

"Tell him, Frank."

A woman had spoken from the doorway to the living room. Apron and slippers. Had to be his wife. She came in now, a tired-looking woman of forty or so.

"Tell him, Frank."

The man raised his head and stared at his wife for almost a minute. They seemed to have forgotten that the Lieutenant was there.

The man said, "How can I?"

"You've got to. We can't live like this much longer."

How *had* they been living, the Lieutenant wanted to ask. But he bided his time. It was all so much better when it came out voluntarily.

"I'd feel like a fool," the man said hoarsely.

"Never mind how you'd feel," his wife said. "Are you going to tell him or am I?"

"Lily," the man said warningly.

"Lily nothing," his wife retorted. "I'm tired of being like a duck in a shooting gallery just because of your silly pride." Her voice broke and her eyes brimmed with tears.

The man looked pleadingly at his wife who returned his look unwaveringly. She was stronger than her husband, the Lieutenant concluded, and he wasn't surprised when the man sighed and turned to him.

His name was Frank Cornish. He and his wife had not always been as happy as they were now. (Now? thought the Lieutenant, looking at their haggard faces). There had been a time when they'd had misunderstandings and he'd turned for solace to a woman in his office. Solace had developed into something else and before he

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realized it he had a violent affair on his hands. No need to go into details. After some months he had come back to his senses and to his wife, who forgave him.

The Lieutenant knew what was coming. This woman in the office had a husband who'd heard only recently about the affair and had vowed revenge. But he was a meek little fellow and everybody had laughed. The more he vowed, the more they laughed. The most he might do, everybody agreed, was to hire some thug to punch Cornish in the nose. And a minute ago, out on the lawn, Cornish had taken the Lieutenant for that thug.

The Lieutenant asked a question. Frank Cornish, it appeared, came home from the city on the same train as Arthur Hopkins. And reached his house about the same time. The killer, after one or two dry runs through the maze of Green Valley, had made a natural mistake and come to Dandelion Road. Same color house, same-looking lawn, same woods across the street. A man getting out of a car and walking up the lawn might easily look like someone else. Especially from the back.

"You heard of a man being shot around here?" the Lieutenant said.

Cornish paled. "That was for me?"

"That was for you."

Cornish began to talk, first slowly, then more rapidly. To tell the truth, he'd known all along that the little man had meant business. He'd been scared, good and scared, ever since someone winged a shot at him on the golf course a week ago. Why hadn't he asked for protection? It wouldn't look right in a neighborhood like this to go around with an armed guard. People would ask questions and find an outraged husband in the background. It would have destroyed all the good will they'd earned for themselves in the community. They desperately wanted to make a new life in Green Valley. They liked it here.

A helluva new life, thought the Lieutenant with some hired thug pegging away at you with a 30-30 from across the road.

"What it was," said Mrs. Cornish wanly, "he was ashamed to report he was afraid of that little Milquetoast. He was sure they'd laugh, that you'd all laugh."

The Lieutenant got the name of the Milquetoast. What a case, he thought. Arthur Hopkins, at least, had gone out neat and clean, with happy thoughts of stuffed owls. It was the meek little guy who was going through hell now and he'd better nail him before he tried to find a way out.

The Lieutenant went to the phone. When he got back, the Cornishes still looked frightened. He told them everything was being covered. He'd round up the little fellow personally and in the meantime there'd be a guard here.

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Back at the car he told Rooney to watch the place, to see that no one entered or left. Rooney didn't look happy, getting out and standing there, next to a velocipede. The Lieutenant got into the driver's seat, grinning, and headed up the winding road. Then he stopped grinning and began to concentrate. How the hell did one get out of here?

Poor Arthur Hopkins, he thought. He really hadn't an enemy in the world, after all. A victim of the suburbs. You took your life in your hands when you went out to live among the honeysuckle and roses.

He had the feeling he was going around in circles and when he saw the slate-gray house and the yellow one next to it and Rooney leaning against a tree he knew it. He hit the horn and Rooney straightened up, then he gave it the gas and zoomed away. He was feeling good—at least this was one case that wouldn't go into the Unsolved File.

He drove carefully, watching landmarks, and wondered if the meek little fellow would shoot it out. Those mild little guys were a nuisance when they went haywire. But he'd bet a ten spot the little man was waiting quietly in his living room and wondering what the devil was keeping the cops.

Keep your shirt on, little man, I'm coming.

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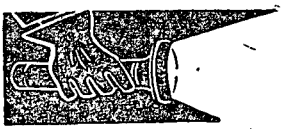

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

There is little in common between Helen Nielson's SING ME A MURDER (Morrow, $2.95), a vivid theatrical tale of murder in Hollywood, and William Haggard's CLOSED CIRCUIT (Washburn, $2.95), a dry ironic story of the British diplomatic service; but they are both sterling specimens of the truly *plotted* suspense novel, intricately devised and counterpoised, without an unnecessary action, with fresh twists and surprises burgeoning on every other page. It's a pleasure to note that plotting, in its full Wilkie Collins meatiness, is not quite a lost art.

★★★★ **THE ONLY GIRL IN THE GAME, *by John D. MacDonald*** (Gold Medal s1015, 35¢)
Bitter, uncompromising story of the men running Las Vegas—the ones who know they are crooks and the ones who think they can stay honest. One of MacDonald's strongest stories.

★★★★ **THE HECKLER, *by Ed McBain*** (Simon & Schuster, $2.95)
The realistic chronicle of one of the rare failures of the 87th Precinct detectives, and as fascinating as any of their past triumphs.

★★★ **FLESH AND BLOOD, *by Bruce Palmer*** (Simon & Schuster, $3.50)
Firmly convincing study of Americans entangled in French justice, confirming the great promise of Palmer's BLIND MAN'S MARK (1959), now reprinted as THE SHATTERED AFFAIR (Avon T-442, 35¢).

★★★ **HOME IS THE PRISONER, *by Jean Potts*** (Scribner's, $2.95)
Quietly tense examination of small-town reaction to a paroled killer, written with warmth and insight.

★★★ **HALL OF DEATH, *by Nedra Tyre*** (Simon & Schuster, $2.95)
Suicide and murder in an outmoded and terrible reform school in the South—a brooding nightmare of half-perceived evil.

David C. Cooke retires, after 15 years of anthologizing, with a BEST OF THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES (Dutton, $3.95), containing a story from each of his past best volumes—various in quality, but all readable and a few (mostly from EQMM) of classic stature.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: WILLIAM HOLDER

TITLE: *The Man Next Door*

TYPE: Human Interest Detective Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *They were next door neighbors—Joe Moran, cop, and Harry Hamilton, "a big little man" in a small town. But now there was more than a low hedge separating them . . .*

HAMILTON SAT IN HIS LIVING-room and watched the big trees push their shadows slowly across Chestnut Street. He had known some bad days, but this one topped them all and it hadn't ended yet. And how it would end he wasn't sure, but he thought he knew. He'd been sitting there for an hour, trying to make up his mind.

Out on the lawn, little Rob and smaller Lucy were playing with the pup that Moran had given them two months before. He remembered, too, that he'd borrowed Joe's power mower last week and had forgotten to return it.

Well, he'd bring it back, and he certainly wouldn't be borrowing it again for some time to come. Not if he knew Moran. You didn't build up a character like Moran's and then throw it away overnight. The truths you lived by were a part of you and you simply couldn't discard them. Well, maybe you acted out of character once in a while—but not Joe Moran.

He gently fingered the lump on the back of his head and thought of last night. As manager, he'd been the last one out of the Mighty Market, and in his pocket had been an envelope containing the late afternoon receipts, which he would put in the night deposit box at the bank. He'd been locking the back

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door, near the parking lot, when he'd been slugged from behind. He had turned and got a good look at the man before the blackjack had descended again and blacked him out.

He supposed it was unlucky, too, that Moran had been the detective sergeant in charge of the affair. He had told Moran that yes, he had seen the thief, and they had gone to headquarters to have a look at the Rogues' Gallery. They had been looking at pictures for half an hour before they came across his own. He had been as surprised as Moran. He had been younger then, and he had worn a mustache, but it was unmistakably he.

And he knew Moran had recognized the picture. There had been a sudden straightening of the heavy shoulders, a quick indrawing of breath. He didn't know whether he or Moran had made the sound. Moran had paused on the page for only a moment, then had turned the file, and they had gone on to the other faces, the other meaningless names. Moran had not looked at him and had said nothing, but Hamilton had known.

He knew, too, how Moran's methodical mind would work. He would take no action until he was sure of what he was doing. But then he would act. Nothing would stop him, Hamilton knew. He was fully aware of Moran's reverence for the law and for his own job of enforcing it.

How long had it been now—six, seven years? A long time that was part of the past—the past that always catches up with you.

His wife came into the room. "Harry, what are you doing, sitting here alone? Come into the kitchen and help me with dinner. How does your head feel?"

He said. "Sit down, Kate. I have some bad news for you."

She was small and slim and fair, and now she sat on the sofa, drying her hands on her apron. She said, "All right, Harry. What is it?"

How could you say it gently? But he tried. "I'm going to be arrested tonight."

She tried to smile, but it was a pitiful effort. "You're joking, Harry. A parking ticket?"

He said, "No," and saw the old fear walk into her eyes—the fear that had been so bright in them once before and that had gradually faded until it had disappeared.

A long moment passed before she said, "It was so far away and so long ago."

He nodded, his thoughts going back to that town in another state where unhappiness had haunted them. The firm he'd been working for had shut down, and it had been the city's single big industry. Kate had been sick, and Ned, only a year old, had been sick. So you used what money you had, and then you used the unemployment insurance, borrowed on your life insurance, and borrowed what you

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could from friends almost as broke as yourself. But the bills continued to be much more than you could handle.

So one night he had broken into the gas station on the edge of town. It had been ridiculously simple. A jimmied window a cash box that invited opening, and $550. After that it had been simply a flight from their small furnished apartment, putting what personal belongings they could into the old car. And because they had been a small inconspicuous family and there had been no reason to suspect him, they had traveled far.

He remembered that night on the road, when he had told her why they were leaving, and what he had done, and why they had to change their name. She had sat in the moving car for ten minutes without speaking, and then she had said dully, "All right, Harry," and had never spoken of it again. But the fear had been heavy in her eyes.

Kate's hands were still wrapped in her apron. "How did they find out after all this time?"

He told her of the circumstances of the last evening. "I was as surprised as Joe to see the picture. I can't figure out how they got it or how they connected me with the thing. But they did."

His wife leaned back tiredly. "It's been good for us here, Harry."

He nodded. Yes, it had been very good. They didn't have much money and they would probably never have a great deal, but they had enough. He had worked up to a nice job and he knew he could keep it as long as he wanted to. All of which had been true up until last night. The kids liked Hill City, and there was Rotary, and he was chairman of the Community Chest. There was the church and the bowling club . . . but what was the use of continuing the litany?

His wife said, "How could Joe Moran do anything like that to you? You go on fishing trips together. He's Lucy's godfather. You play cards together once a week. My God, they eat here and we eat in their house!"

"You know what Joe is like. That's one reason we like him so much. He's right off the top."

"I just can't believe it," his wife said.

Hamilton sat there for a moment. Maybe Joe Moran wouldn't blow the whistle. Maybe these good years they had shared so closely would make the difference. Maybe. But he didn't think so. He got up. "There are a few things I have to do. I'll be back in a minute. Try to figure something out."

But how could you salvage anything from a mess like this?

Moran sat on the porch of his house and watched Chestnut Street fill slowly with shadow. There had been bad days before, but none so tough as this. He'd been sitting there for a long time, trying to come

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to a decision. He was quite sure what he'd have to do ultimately, but he'd rather cut off an arm. There was an out, of course. He could play for a little while at being God, but that would shade all his future actions and nullify completely all the past.

He shifted his glance to the Hamilton place next door. Rob and Lucy were playing with the collie pup, and he remembered the shots of delight when he'd brought it over a couple of months ago. He remembered, too, that Harry had borrowed his mower last week, and now his own lawn needed cutting. He'd have to get it back. A fine gag. You locked a guy up and then got your mower back.

He had been shocked when they had come across the picture last night. He had tried to conceal his surprise and he thought he'd been successful. Maybe, he had thought then, there had been a mistake. He'd go back to the picture and the story himself, later. Harry hadn't said a word, and Moran wasn't sure that there had been anything unusual in his manner.

So he had checked after Harry, all right. The face was younger, and there was the mustache, but there was the same little scar on the left cheek-bone, too.

And he had read the notice. Harry Humiston—he'd changed his name to Hamilton and shaved his mustache, that was all. But he must have glanced at this picture many times before, and it had rung no bell. Without Harry's face beside his own, he'd never have recognized the faded, somewhat blurry print as that of his next door neighbor.

Harry was wanted for the burglary of a gas station seven years ago. The robbery had been unwitnessed, but there had been fingerprints. They had made the routine check with the Armed Forces file, and sure enough Harry had been in the Army. They even had his picture. An indictment had been handed up, but they had never found Humiston.

So *he'd* had to find him. The man lived next door and he was as nice a person as you would be likely to meet. He fished well and played a good game of cards, and his kids and your kids grew up together. He even had lent you money, on a tough occasion, and you'd eaten his bread. And then you had to lock him up.

His wife came out onto the porch. Nelly was tall and dark and slim, and when she grinned at him he felt fifteen years younger. She said, "Make us a drink, Joe. The kids have worn me down. They've been in and out all day."

He made the drinks and brought them out to the porch. The street was almost fully in shadow now, and in an hour it would be dark. He handed Nelly a drink and sat down heavily. "I have trouble, Nell."

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"Bills?" she said. They frequently had trouble with bills.

He shook his head, "I have to arrest Harry Hamilton."

She stared at him for a moment. "You must be out of your mind."

He told her the story slowly, and when he had finished he lit a cigarette and took a long draw at his drink. His wife sat silent, looking at him. In a moment she said, "Suppose you just ignore the whole thing? There isn't a chance of anyone else seeing the picture, is there?"

"Not much of a chance. I recognized it only because he was right there with me. I looked directly from his face down at this old photo."

She said quietly, "Forget about it, Joe."

"I'd like to. God, how I'd like to!"

"They eat with us," his wife said, and her voice was becoming unsettled. "Their kids are practically our kids. Katie just made me a dress for my birthday. She took care of me for weeks after Willy was born."

"If I forgot about it, there would be other things," Moran said slowly. "You know how I feel, Nell. I've never taken so much as a cigar. I don't make the laws or the circumstances. It's probably the only time he's taken a dollar that didn't belong to him. But how do I know?"

"He's a good man," his wife said. "You can tell. Forget about it, Joe."

He got up and strode along the porch. "I don't know! I don't know what to do about it!" But within himself he knew what he was going to do, what he had to do.

His wife stood beside him, and suddenly her arm was about his shoulders. "You do it your way. Whatever it is, I'll understand." She was crying quietly as she went into the house.

Moran crossed his own lawn and Hamilton met him at the low hedge that separated the properties. He said, "Hi Joe," and Moran said, "Evening, Harry."

"You want the mower? I should have brought it over a couple of days ago."

"Yeah the grass is running away with me." Moran lit a cigarette. He'd made up his mind. You can't dedicate yourself to one purpose, one way of life, for fifteen years, and then make a big switch. The Lord knew there were times he had been tempted, but never like this. On the other occasions money had been the consideration and he had resisted easily. This was different. But he couldn't change.

He suddenly flicked the cigarette out into the street. "Harry, I didn't come over about the mower. I . . ."

Hamilton held up a hand. "Whoa! I know what you're going to say, Joe. You don't have to bother."

"I wish I didn't but . . ."

"I called them," Hamilton said. "Not fifteen minutes ago."

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Moran stared. "You called who?"

"Your boys," Hanilton said, and his grin was white and sickly in the dusk. "I told them who and where and what and when. I figured I'd save you a little trouble."

Moran was silent for a long moment. "How did you know I recognized the picture?"

Hamilton looked out into the street. "I wasn't positive, but I couldn't take a chance. It would be a hell of a thing, you locking me up." He tried to grin again.

Moran cursed softly. "You're a fool. No one but me would have known that picture. There isn't another guy at headquarters . . ."

Hamilton's voice was soft with friendship. "But you would have taken me in, wouldn't you, Joe?"

Moran looked at him, then nodded. "I would have had to."

"Sure," Hamilton said. "But I like to think you wouldn't have been crazy about the job."

"You know all about that," Moran said, and he thanked Hamilton in his heart for not having forced him to hammer home the nails. He said, "What about the money?"

His heart went up when Hamilton said, "I returned it three years ago, when Kate and I took the trip to New York. I mailed five hundred and fifty bills to the oil company, with a printed note."

Moran's mind was working fast now. "All right. That's a big thing. I don't think they'll even go to the bother and the expense of extraditing you. And I went to school with the head of the State Police in . . ." He named the state. "He can do a lot of good. And I'll go down and post your bail for tonight." He was beginning to feel a lot better. "I know a lot of guys on the papers, and I think they'll keep quiet."

Then he saw the plain police sedan coming down the block. It headed into the curb, and Moran put his arm around Hamilton's shoulder and they walked together to the car. He saw that it was Reese and Deegan, a couple of his own men.

Moran said, "Harry, you may not know it, but you're a big little man in this town. The Community Chest, the work you did on the hospital drive. You think people forget about things like that? You'll probably spend a day in jail, and if we're lucky no one at all is going to learn about this."

Hamilton said, "Joe, I don't know how to say it, but . . ."

Moran said to Reese, "Take good care of my friend, Jimmy. And keep this quiet."

Reese nodded, and Hamilton got into the back seat. As the car drew away, Hamilton said, "Don't forget the mower, Joe."

Moran walked back to his house. Through the intensity of his concentration he became aware of his wife standing on the porch. He kissed her on the nose.

He said, "It's all right, Nelly—everything is going to be all right."

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	JOHN REESE
TITLE:	*The Symbolic Logic of Murder*
TYPE:	Ultra-Modern Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Darwin Carlisle
LOCALE:	Los Angeles, California
TIME:	Today
COMMENTS:	*Meet Darwin Carlisle, young space scientis and genius, as he applies simple algebra to a not-so-simple murder here on good ol earth. Elementary, my dear reader—and yet fascinatingly ingenious!*

"I DREAD TALKING TO HIM AGAIN," SAID DETECTIVE RICH HINKLE. "THIS genius, I mean—this young space scientist, Darwin Carlisle—this brain!"

"Him?" said Detective Jack Kunz. "How come?"

"This whole space exploration deal gives me the creeps, and so do these young eggheads," Hinkle said moodily. "It's contrary to the laws of nature to shoot at the moon!"

"Oh, Carlisle's all right," said Kunz.

"He is? Listen, any guy of twenty-four that sits around with a pretty girl and works equations—Jack, he's got to be *slightly* abnormal!"

Kunz thought it over. "I don't react that way. I kind of like the kid. It's old McKinstry that gives me the creeps."

"The preacher?" said Hinkle. "What's wrong with him?"

"Nothing," Kunz replied slowly, with a shiver, "but all preachers give me the creeps. It must be a subconscious guilt left over from something that happened when I was a kid. I guess where you are afraid of science, I'm afraid of religion, or something."

"Well," said Hinkle after a moment, "this whole case gives me the creeps. Especially Darwin Carlisle."

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As a rule, homicide men are immune to moods, and these two were veterans, above average in intelligence. Both were college graduates; both were big, dark, neat men in their forties. They had been partners on the night watch for so long that, like old married people, they now looked alike, and had grown heavy, deliberate, thoughtful, and slow-moving together.

It was 1:35 a.m. They had worked all night on what should have been an easy case. A petty thug who had made his living extorting money from bookies on the North Side of Los Angeles had been murdered last evening. Hinkle and Kunz had interviewed three witnesses, and had caused the arrests of four cheap racketeers.

All four had been associates of the dead man, all were capable of murder, and each had ample reason to desire the victim's death. Hinkle and Kunz were sure that they had the killers in jail, but they were just as sure that they would never be able to prove it. The four suspects had refused to talk—a stupid tactic but an effective one since there was really nothing to connect them with the crime.

It was an unimportant killing, but like all men, policemen are depressed by defeat. To be so close to success and still to be humiliated by the four miserable specimens now languishing in jail was a peculiarly painful form of frustration.

Hinkle and Kunz even thought alike, so that when one had the creeps, the other had them too. Between them they filled the room to overflowing with eerie gloom. It was a small room, furnished only with a table and six chairs. They had pulled the records of the four suspects, but there was little in them that they did not already know. Other details had been supplied by robbery and vice squad stoolies. Few men know as much about their own wives as Hinkle and Kunz knew about their suspects. Yet the homicide men were at a dead end.

"May as well get it over with," Hinkle sighed. "We can't keep three honest witnesses waiting all night."

Kunz went to the door, opened it, and said, "If you people will come in, we'd like to talk to you once more, please."

First to enter was Shelley Parkinson, a small, vividly dark girl with such a look of happy innocence that it was like turning on more lights in the room. Some of the gloom melted from it. Both detectives had to smile at the mere sight of her pretty, cheerful face and trim, girlish figure. Hinkle stood up and pulled out a chair.

"Here, Miss Parkinson," he said. "It's certainly good of you people to wait so long for us."

"Oh, we didn't wait all this time. We went out for coffee. Was that all

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right?" the girl said. Her huge, brown eyes grew enormous as it occurred to her, too late, that they might have done something wrong.

"Of course it was all right!" Kunz said enthusiastically, before his surprised partner could open his mouth.

The girl was followed by a well-dressed man with a heavy shock of white hair and a lined but ruggedly handsome face. This was the Reverend Doctor G. Bart McKinstry, the minister who gave the obscurely sinful Kunz the creeps. He sat down opposite the girl, with the exhausted sigh of an old man who should have been in bed hours ago.

Lastly came a blond youth with a crew-cut, with horn-rimmed glasses and a halfback's physique. Much of his muscular grace, however, seemed to have been oddly eroded away, as if by the drain of condensation from the pleasant intellectual fog in which he lived. His pockets were stuffed with crumpled papers, sharp pencils, and the inevitable slide rule; his blue eyes beheld without really seeing; and he walked with the dreamy shuffle of one whose motor nerves were better attuned to the orbit of Venus than to his own feet.

Darwin Carlisle sprang from a long line of university forebears. His father taught physics, his mother geology, at Columbia. Darwin was a graduate student at California Institute of Technology, where he was earning his doctorate by designing guidance systems for space probes, and then describing them in monographs that not more than a dozen people in the whole world could understand. There are such people, and they differ from most mortals in that foggy, dreamy, star-smitten expression. Otherwise they look as normal and wholesome as shoe clerks, faucet manufacturers, and first basemen.

"This is a nice room," Darwin said, looking around at the naked walls, the gaunt furniture, and the bare ceiling with its one stark light. "Nothing to distract you here, is there? A room for thinking!"

Hinkle flinched. Dr. McKinstry angrily looked the other way. These three witnesses had been together for more than four hours—plenty of time for the young man's neo-functional, interplanetary personality to have collided violently with the old preacher's stern fundamentalism. It was plain that Hinkle was not the only man who got the creeps from Carlisle.

Darwin sat down beside Shelley. She put her hand on his arm, a gesture both trusting and proprietary. It showed that while she relied on him to protect her from tigers, bandits, and traveling salesmen, she also was ready to wipe his nose for him whenever necessary.

"Sorry we made you wait so long," said Kunz, "but we hoped you would remember something that had slipped your mind when we first talked to you."

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"We're badly in need of help," said Hinkle.

"Oh, dear!" Shelley wailed. "Didn't you catch the four men you wanted so badly?"

"Yes," Kunz said grimly. "They were picked up by various units of the department within one hour of the murder. They were scattered all over the city, but not so far that they could not have been together at the scene of the murder at the time it took place."

"But if you have the murderers, how can we help?"

Hinkle said, "All four of them have alibis, miss. Not unimpeachable alibis, I'm sure, but all four have dummied up and won't even admit what time it is. This is not the only thing this department has to do, and it will take more time and manpower than the chief can spare to prove that two or more of our suspects, plus two or more of their alibi witnesses, are lying."

"I see," the girl said.

"What do you mean by 'prove'? The term is subject to narrower definition," said Darwin.

Hinkle glared at him. "Oh? In what way?"

"Well, I can 'prove' the speed of light to you with analogic instruments, because you accept their rationality. But how can I 'prove' it to a jungle cannibal? Conversely, I can 'prove' to the cannibal that he owes me a debt, by merely hitting him over the head. He accepts the logic of brute force, while you, I'm sure would demand invoices."

There was a moment of deep silence. Shelley looked proud, Kunz looked worried, and Hinkle and Dr. McKinstry seemed to be counting silently from one to ten.

"I'm familiar with that point of view," Dr. McKinstry said. "The exact quotation is, *And Pilate said, What is truth?* The time comes, young man, when all we get by splitting hairs is smaller fragments of hair!"

"I didn't mean to be argumentative, sir," said Darwin.

"Then why not just listen?" the minister snapped. "I can 'prove' that the firmament is not merely a shooting gallery for you young squirts over here at Cal Tech, but at this moment these officers have requested our help in solving a murder."

"We have to 'prove' it to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt, Darwin," Kunz explained. "Let's go over it again, and see if one of you can remember *something* that will help us connect these men with the job."

The detectives were skilled interrogators and the witnesses were eager to help. Unfortunately, there were excellent reasons why they could not.

It had been raining hard at 7:54 p.m., the moment of death for Rudy Lambert, alias Walter Lane, alias Rudolf Walters, but better known as

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Needle Nose the Fink. According to the stoolies, Needle Nose had, by his own code, earned execution. Two weeks ago he had extorted $100 from one Albine Wooten, a girl bookie, by threatening to pour acid in her ears. Albine later had calmed her nerves with a fifth of vodka, and then strolled in front of a five-ton truck. Four men had attended her funeral.

One was her brother, Mickey Boyce, a strong-arm robber with a psychopathic record. One was her "lay-off man," Red Pearson, the North Side's boss bookie. A third was her boy friend, Stanley Manlo, a pinsetter in a bowling alley and a pathological coward who slept with a switch-blade knife under his pillow. The fourth was Sid Filette, whose North Figueroa Street newsstand also handled a little cut-price marijuana. Sid's grief had perhaps been most poignant of all, since Albine had expired owing him money.

Four more unappetizing individuals than Boyce, Pearson, Manlo, and Filette do not exist; but charming people rarely commit premeditated murder, and when they do, they employ elaborately ingenious devices that always go wrong. Then the homicide men, who have seen everything, easily whisk them in. There had been no such defect in the brilliantly stupid simplicity of this murder.

Needle Nose had ducked vengeance by the unlikely ruse of working as a handyman in the last house on Frenchick Way, a dead-end street one block long. Rain or shine, Dr. McKinstry, who lived at 4772 Frenchick, always took an evening walk. He was on his way home in the heavy rain when he saw, across the street, another pedestrian whom he recognized as his neighbor's new employee.

He was sure no one else was afoot on the street. The handyman hurried on. Dr. McKinstry turned into his own sidewalk. He had taken two steps when several gunshots—he was not sure if there were two or three—boomed out.

There was no outcry of accusation or pain—no sound at all but those shots and the violent beating of the rain. Dr. McKinstry knew instantly that something terrible had happened. He stopped, half paralyzed by horror.

Then the starter of an automobile began grinding. The engine started and the dark mass of the car hurtled past him.

"It must have been parked at the end of the street. Its lights did not go on until after it turned the corner. It passed within ten feet of me, but I don't know how many men were in it. I have a feeling, though, that I saw more than one shadow," said the tired old preacher. "I made an effort to control myself, and I remember thinking that I had to memorize

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the license number. I felt it would be important to the authorities, but it was too dark, or perhaps I was just not alert enough."

"You can't give us any idea of that license number—even one digit or one letter?" Kunz asked hopefully.

"No. I remember only the terrible roar of the engine. I recall the thought that went through my mind—*'Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions.'* Then I'm afraid my mind simply went blank."

Hinkle sighed. "We can't blame you, sir. You have no idea what make of car it was?"

"Officer, I don't really know one car from another."

Kunz looked at Shelley. "You got a look at it—do you think you might be able to identify it now, after thinking it over?"

She looked troubled. "No, sir—only that it was an old-model sedan. You know, before they started putting on those tail fins. And I seem to recall that it was a grubby blue in color. You know what happens to blue when you don't take care of it."

"Oxidization," Darwin Carlisle murmured.

"I'll make a note of that," Hinkle said coldly. "Now, you two were on Miss Parkinson's porch, at 4770 Frenchick Way, next door to Dr. McKinstry—right?"

"Yes, sir. I was facing the street and Darwin was facing the house. That's why he didn't see as much as I did," said Shelley.

"But he knows it was oxidized," said Hinkle. "May I ask why you were facing the street, and why he was not?"

"He—he was kissing me good night," she said, "but do you have to put that in the papers?"

"Of course not!" said Kunz. "Have you remembered how many shots you heard?"

"No, sir. It could have been two or three or four."

"Have you been able to recall how many people were in the car you saw?"

"No, sir, only that I have a distinct impression of more than one."

"You and the Reverend both have that impression, and several quick shots don't sound like a one-man job," Hinkle said. "In other words, none of you can add anything to what you told us earlier tonight?"

All three witnesses shook their head. Darwin Carlisle said, "What about your prisoners' cars? If one of them is an old-model sedan—"

"They don't own any cars, any of them," Hinkle snapped. "Oxidized or otherwise. They've got us whipped and they know it. That's what burns me up!"

They sat there in dispirited silence a moment, five sincere people whose

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best was not good enough. Then Dr. McKinstry murmured apologetically, "I'm sorry. I guess we didn't give you very good clues, did we?"

"It's not your fault, Reverend," said Hinkle. "At least we're sure of one thing—it wasn't a one-man job. But were there two, three, or four of them in on it? That's what we don't know!"

"And none of them will talk?" said Darwin.

Kunz grinned. "Well, we did get one squeal out of Red Pearson when we started to leave him alone with Sid Filette and Mick Boyce, right here in this very room. Red is not what you'd call a trusting soul, not even here."

"Not with those two," said Hinkle. "Sid and Mick are bad medicine. Red's not taking a chance on one of them getting behind him with a shiv, while he's watching the other one. That's how he has run the North Side bookies so long—by not ever letting Boyce and Filette get him between them."

"Oh, they sound horrid!" Shelley cried. "I had no idea there were such people in the world."

"You're giving these guys the benefit of the doubt, miss," Hinkle said. "You see, ganging up on this job doesn't make them pals. We're dealing with thieves that hate everybody, especially one another. All that could possibly bring them together is mutual hatred."

She shuddered. "I can't imagine human beings living like that. I can't!" she said in a low voice.

Kunz gritted, "Miss, guys like that are why my partner and I have careers. Let me tell you about them—Mickey Boyce, for instance. The fun you get from television, Mickey gets from breaking somebody's arm. Why, I've seen little Stanley Manlo run like a rabbit on an open street in broad daylight just to avoid meeting Mick. Stanley lives in terror of that goon. Mick is one of those guys that enjoys torturing people. The only man on earth he's afraid of is Red Pearson."

"Red threatened to kill him one day," Hinkle explained, "and some day he'll do it, and Mick knows it."

"This Red Pearson seems to have a strong, dominating personality," Dr. McKinstry observed.

"Yes," said Hinkle, "but he couldn't dominate Albine Wooten. She told me once that Red warned her to cut loose from Stan Manlo because she couldn't depend on a coward. But she loved the guy. Well, Red was right! Stan sure wasn't around when Needle Nose put the old arm on her."

Again a small shudder ran through the girl's shapely body, and her brown eyes reflected shocked admiration as they darted from one detec-

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ive to the other. Kunz saw the impression they were making, and after his frustrating night's work he needed admiration. He warmed to his ubject.

"Or you take the noble small businessman, Sid Filette. Now there's a way to live! Sid has been held up and shaken down and rousted around o often in that crummy newsstand of his—and by his own friends!—that ie has a standing rule never to be alone with any one of them. His nick-ıame is Witness, because he's a guy who wants a witness around at all imes. Even when we want to talk to him, we have to be sure that two officers go in. How do you like that?"

"It's unbelievable!" the girl gasped.

"To you, maybe," said Hinkle, "or to a jury. But not to anyone who knows these guys. These aren't big-time hoodlums, miss. These are the cum of the underworld. But that doesn't mean that they haven't made us ook like jackasses."

"If only we had that license number!" said Kunz.

"Why," said Darwin Carlisle, "do you need that?"

He blinked genially through his horn-rimmed glasses. Both detectives were discouraged and tired. Even Kunz grew slightly red-faced, and Hinkle winced with the effort of holding his temper. It was Hinkle who aid, with excessive politeness, "Just how else do we connect these guys vith the job, kid?"

"It seems to me you already have," said Darwin.

"Oh, we have, have we?" said Kunz.

"Yes. Look, I'll show you—"

Darwin took a pencil from one pocket, a piece of paper from another, ınd scribbled rapidly for a minute. He handed the paper to Hinkle. Kunz got up quickly and came around to read over Hinkle's shoulder. The two letectives found themselves staring at this:

$$\exists P + BM + BF + PM + PF + MF + BPM + BMF + BPF + PMF + BPMF \neq 0.$$

$$\exists \bar{P} = 0.$$

$$\exists M + BF + PM + PF + MF + BPM + BMF + BPF + PMF + BPMF \neq 0.$$

$$\exists \bar{M} + B\bar{P}M + \bar{P}MF + B\bar{P}MF = 0.$$

$$\exists M + BF + PF + MF + BMF + BPF \neq 0.$$

$$\exists \bar{P}F = 0.$$

$$\exists M + BF + PF + MF + BMF \neq 0.$$

$$\exists \bar{M} = 0.$$

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$BF + PF + MF + BMF \neq 0.$
$B\overline{F} + P\overline{F} + M\overline{F} + = 0.$
$BMF \neq 0.$

Kunz so far forgot himself as to blurt out, "What the hell is this a-prescription?"

"A set of equations in symbolic logic," said Darwin, "or inequations rather, this being the simplest attack on so simple a problem."

"And what," said Hinkle hoarsely, "is symbolic logic?"

"A method of solving logical problems by algebra."

"Do you do this when you shoot rockets at the moon?" said Hinkle There was a dangerous glint in his eye.

"It is used in designing all complex circuitry, and that includes rocke guidance systems."

"Now wait a minute, Rich. Let him work this out!" Kunz pleaded a Hinkle stumbled to his feet. "What have we got to lose?"

Hinkle sat down. Darwin reached across and took back the paper Shelley beamed proudly. Kunz and Hinkle leaned across the table t watch. Even Dr. McKinstry showed interest, if not approval.

"We know that with four factors, sixteen combinations are possible, in cluding 'one' and 'none,' " said Darwin. "We can eliminate the four 'ones since both Shelley and Dr. McKinstry are quite sure there were mor than one man in the car. We can, of course, also eliminate 'none,' sinc somebody had to be there to commit the murder. That leaves us witl only eleven combinations. Now, using letters to represent your men—I for Boyce, P for Pearson, M for Manlo, and F for Filette—we write ou eleven combinations in our first equations, as follows:

$BP + BM + BF + PM + PF + MF + BPM + BMF + BPF + PMI + BPMF \neq 0.$

"Only one combination can be guilty. The others aren't; so our equa tion is not balanced. That's why we draw a line through the 'equal' sign— to make it mean 'not equal,' or rather, 'not true.' Now we'll consider thes men one at a time. You say Boyce was so afraid of Pearson that he woul never be alone with him. In the Boyce-Pearson combination, Boyce there fore becomes a negative quantity. We draw a line over him to indicate th negative, writing that as a separate equation, as follows:

$\overline{B}P = 0.$

"Here we use the 'equal' sign, because this combination is true. Having eliminated that combination, we have left this equation:

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$BM + BF + PM + PF + MF + BPM + BMF + BPF + PMF + BPMF \neq 0.$

"Now let's consider Pearson. He distrusted the coward, Manlo, so profoundly that it's hard to believe he would ever participate in a murder with him. So in all combinations where both P and M appear, P must be negative. Let's write those combinations that way—using, as you will note, the 'equal' sign to indicate truth:

$\overline{P}M + B\overline{P}M + \overline{P}MF + B\overline{P}MF = 0.$

"Now we have only this left of our first equations:

$BM + BF + PF + MF + BMF + BPF \neq 0.$

"But you say Pearson never lets himself be caught between Boyce and Filette—that he objected when you tried to leave him alone with them here. Would he go out on a murder job with them?—and with them armed? Hardly! So we must write the Boyce-Pearson-Filette combination as true, with a negative P and the 'equal' sign:

$B\overline{P}F = 0.$

"Which leaves us only this of our original equation:

$BM + BF + PF + MF + BMF \neq 0.$

"But Manlo, you say, ran like a rabbit at the very sight of Boyce. Certainly he'd never help him on a murder, unless someone was along to protect him. So we write the Boyce-Manlo combination with a negative M and the 'equal' sign:

$B\overline{M} = 0.$

"Which leaves us only these combinations:

$BF + PF + MF + BMF \neq 0.$

"But you say that Filette is so afraid of his friends that he has a rule never to be alone with any one of them. In all two-man combinations where Filette appears, we must therefore use a negative F and the 'equal' sign, as follows:

$B\overline{F} + P\overline{F} + M\overline{F} = 0.$

"Which leaves us, of our eleven original combinations, only BMF. This part of the equation *is* true, and it is the ***only one*** that can be true. It proves

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that Boyce, Manlo, and Filette *together* were the murderers. If any sum is equal to zero, then all of its parts are equal to zero too, and in a binomial system the opposite is also true. In short, not one of the three can possibly deny his guilt!"

Darwin pushed the paper across to Hinkle who gave it one quick, creepy look and refused to touch it. "Is that what you call *proof?*" he said in a choking voice. "What'll you guys at Cal Tech dream up next?"

"We didn't dream it up. Symbolic logic was invented, if we may use that term, in 1847 by an English mathematician, George Boole, who is probably doing handsprings in his grave over the way I have oversimplified his system. It's often called Boolean algebra, and it has been used by logicians and mathematicians for over a century," said Darwin.

"But what is a century in the story of mankind?" Dr. McKinstry said indignantly. "Men aren't numbers or letters! That's the trouble with you scientists—you try to reduce human beings to mere quantitative symbols."

"Not quantitative, sir—relational," said Darwin. "The letters, B, P, M, and F do not represent men, but only the narrow characteristics that make it possible or impossible for them to be at a certain place at a certain time for the certain purpose of committing murder."

"I cannot believe it!" The old man shook his white head. "Human beings are far too complex for such—such abracadabra!"

Kunz picked up the paper. "I'm not so sure, sir," he said thoughtfully. "These are pretty primitive specimens of mankind. I don't understand all these hieroglyphics, but I give you my word I understand those four crooks."

Shelley did not understand either, but her faith never wavered. "They're always trying to trip Darwin up on the electronic computer at Cal Tech, but they never can," she said. "Why don't you ask them to check this out? I bet you find out that Darwin is right again!"

"Unfortunately, miss, there are no electronic computers on a jury," Hinkle said gloomily. He hit the table with his fist. "No, we've got to find that car!"

"If the information you gave me about the suspects is accurate, then my symbols are valid, my equations correct, and my conclusion inescapable," said Darwin. "However, I have an idea about the car, too."

He wrote something on another piece of paper which he handed across the table to Dr. McKinstry. "Please take a look at that, sir. At the same time, try to recall when you heard those shots and saw that car, and see if anything comes back to you."

Kunz and Hinkle craned their necks to read what looked to them like a list of California automobile license numbers:

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LOV 538; HLE 886; JIK 213; ISA 529; SRP 471; MOI 398; DCH 935.

The old preacher took the paper reluctantly. Kunz and Hinkle saw him run his eyes over the list, lay the paper aside with an impatient frown, then snatch it up again. They saw him stare at it and then turn pale, as he remembered 7:54 p.m. in all its shock and horror.

"That's it—the license number of that car!" he shouted. "It's the fourth number on the list. Why, I can see it as plainly as though it were—"

But Hinkle and Kunz had already snatched the paper from him and were running from the room. They were back in three minutes—it takes no more than that to check a license number with the California Department of Motor Vehicles. And now both men had a creepy look.

"It's a 1952 blue sedan, registered to Sid Filette's landlord's sister," said Kunz. "This ties him in, and I'll bet we tie the other two in, too!"

Hinkle looked at Carlisle with an expression almost of fear. "But don't you dare show us your equations on this one!" he muttered. "If I have to see any more symbolic logic tonight, I'll go nuts."

"This wasn't symbolic logic, sir," said Darwin. "Dr. McKinstry twice quoted Scripture tonight. The verse about Pilate was pointedly apropos to our discussion of the exact meaning of words, but I'll have to ask him to pardon me for saying that his other quotation did not make the same kind of sense. This was when he said that the automobile made him think of the roaring of lions. Unfortunately, here we must again use the most precise definitions.

"It *did* roar, but not like a lion. The two sounds have nothing in common, and the one could not suggest the other. Why, then, did Dr. McKinstry recall so irrelevant a passage? Could it be that, for some reason, he had made an effort to remember that exact verse? If so, why?

"Most of us, when we must remember something like a phone number or an address, associate it with something already familiar. When I first met Shelley, for a long time I had to remind myself of silver and ytterbium, these being the forty-seventh and seventieth in the periodic table of the elements. It was the only way I could remember that she lived at 4770 Frenchick Way. Do you follow me?"

"Oh, yes, sure!" said Hinkle, swallowing hard. "Silver what was it? Sure, anybody would do it that way!"

"I think," said Darwin, "that Dr. McKinstry, being an intelligent, conscientious man, tried to associate the license number with something familiar—in this case, the fifth chapter and the twenty-ninth verse of the book of Isaiah. Somehow, the human mind being the marvelously complex thing it is, he afterward associated the verse through its context, rather than its number, which would be written ISA 529."

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"How do you know so much about the Bible?" said Dr. McKinstry.

"My grandfather, who teaches philosophy at Harvard, gave me a hundred dollars for memorizing the book of Isaiah when I was sixteen. It's a very helpful reference for a scientist. For instance, in the sixty-fifth chapter—"

"Go home," said Kunz. "All of you go home!"

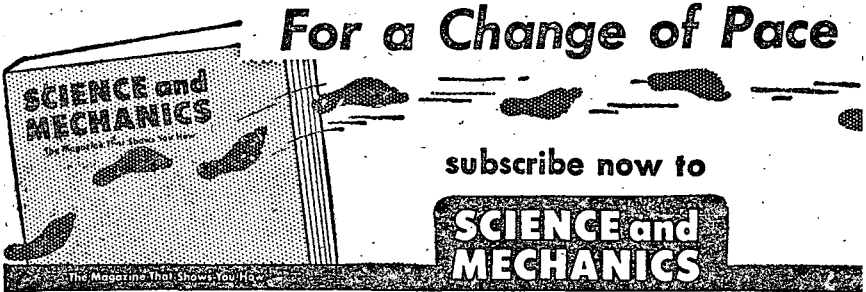
He had just remembered why preachers gave him the creeps. It had to do with the dishonest way he had won a camera as a Sunday School prize—by writing Bible verses on his cuff, instead of memorizing them.

To the end of his life Kunz would feel like a crook, just as Hinkle would feel stupid. But a little humility is good for all of us, and it probably helped the two men when they sat down to reason with Red Pearson.

Once Red realized that they were not trying to frame him for a murder he had not committed, he cooperated willingly, even enthusiastically. After that it was easy to break down the cowardly Manlo.

It was 3:29 a.m. when they left the police building, with their case all wrapped up. The rain was over and the stars were out. So was the moon —a bloodshot crescent that was just about ready to set. It looked weak and helpless to Hinkle, hanging there above the mountains as though half of its supports had been shot away. He looked up at it with a sigh.

"I still wish they'd leave it alone!" he said.



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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **BILLY ROSE**

TITLE: ***Beyond All Doubt***

TYPE: Courtroom Story

LOCALE: Villeroi

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *The world-famous showman and theatrical personality tells the fascinating story of a defense attorney's 74th murder trial.*

MOST OF THE VILLAGE OF VILLEROI was squeezed into the courtroom. The accused man sat in the prisoner's box and rested his fat little hands on the rail.

Philippe Durand, the famous defense attorney from Brussels who had cheated the gallows 71 times in 73 murder trials, was a baldish, paunchy little man whose suit could have used a pressing.

"Gentlemen of the jury," Durand began quietly. "Henri Volpin is accused of the murder of twelve women. For a week I have listened as your prosecutor tightened the noose around my client's neck.

"Now I ask you to remember that no eyewitness to any of the murders has been produced. No one has found so much as a fingernail of the missing girls. Your prosecutor has built his case on circumstantial evidence—some half-remembered words, a button here, a few women's shoes.

"At this moment, if you were polled, I know what your verdict would be. Some of you might even be glad to lend a hand with the rope.

"I remember a bookkeeper in the village where I was born who was a great deal like Henri Volpin. He was a quiet little man—no one ever gave him a second look. I gather that in the forty-one years Volpin has lived in Villeroi, scarcely anyone has given *him* a second look. And in a village that is not the usual thing. An extra glass of cognac, a walk with a girl, is enough to get a man talked about.

"According to the testimony, here is what happened to this obscure bookkeeper: one evening a

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car drove up to your only hotel. An expensively dressed man and a girl wearing no stockings demanded and got the best room. The hotelkeeper's wife testified she heard loud talk in their room next morning. She told you the man drove away and left the girl behind. That afternoon the strange girl walked into the little café where Henri was reading the paper over a beer. She sat down with him.

"The waiter has told you that Henri bought a bottle of cognac, and the pair discussed going to the bookkeeper's house. The strange girl was never seen again. The learned prosecutor has produced no one who actually saw them enter Volpin's house, but he introduced as evidence a high-heeled shoe found in Volpin's bedroom. The hotelkeeper's wife recognized it as the strange girl's.

"A week later the attendant at the cinema saw Volpin sit down next the Molreaux girl. The widow Prejean, Volpin's next-door neighbor, says she heard a woman laughing in Henri's house that night. She swears it was the laughter of the Molreaux girl. The Molreaux girl has not been seen since and the prosecution lays great stress on a green suede pump found in my client's bureau drawer.

"Next, you heard the testimony about Louise Rhon, the schoolmistress from Saint-Vith. The head of the school told you Mlle. Rhon resigned her position to come to Villeroi and marry a bookkeeper named Volpin. The cartman swore he deposited the lady and her baggage at the defendant's door. The prosecutor showed you a brown walking shoe discovered in M. Volpin's cellar, and Mlle. Rhon's sister came from Saint-Vith and positively identified it.

"You have heard the detailed testimony regarding the disappearance of eight other girls under more or less similar circumstances.

"This is the case against Henri Volpin. Remember that it is not a capital offense to collect shoes. Under the law you must not send Henri Volpin to his death unless you are convinced—*beyond a reasonable doubt*—that he committed murder!"

He paused, looking at each juror in turn. "I say you *do* doubt," he whispered, "even though you don't know it yourselves!"

"There is no doubt!" shouted the sister of the missing schoolteacher.

The judge quieted the court, and the paunchy little lawyer continued. "If one of the girls you are so sure is dead were to walk into this courtroom, what would you say? Would you still be sure there is no doubt?"

He slowly raised his arm and pointed to the green door at the back of the court. "Gentleman of the jury," he commanded, *"I ask you to direct your eyes to that door!"*

There was a sharp intake of

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breath as heads throughout the courtroom turned. The stenographer stopped writing. A small boy in front stood up. Almost everyone in the village was related to one of the missing girls.

After what seemed like forever, when the silence was pounding in everyone's head, the attorney spoke: 'Forgive me for building up your hopes. Forgive me for this shabby little trick. No one is going to walk through the door. *But I was the only one in this courtroom who was certain of that!* Everybody else thought somebody might. In every mind there was a doubt. Gentlemen of the jury, if there was doubt in your mind, you must acquit this man."

Philippe Durand sat down.

"Your man from Brussels is really something," whispered the Paris correspondent to a colleague. "Volpin will walk out of here a free man."

But the verdict was guilty. The official sentence was death by hanging.

One of the jurors had noticed that Volpin had never once looked toward the door.

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The third exploit of teenage 'tec, Wally the Watchful Eye

Wally the Optimistic Op

by PAUL W. FAIRMAN

The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building
New York, New York

Mr. Walter A. Watts
Lettyville, New York
Dear Mr. Watts:

Allow me to thank you for your prompt and most enthusiastic application for our New Advanced Course in Detection, open only to our own graduates. This series of six lessons is probably the finest thing of its kind ever written and would unquestionably be of great value to you—if it were possible for us to make delivery.

This last, however, in your case, seems doubtful because, even with the payment clause underlined—$20.00 in advance—you still enclosed a money order for only $1.98. We are usually most understanding in matters of this kind, but a glance at your past record shows that you have gained great benefits from Watchful Eye in return for an astonishingly small outlay of cash. I am not saying that you are reluctant in meeting your just obligations, only that it always seems to work out that way.

Therefore, I am forced to withhold the lessons until payment for the full tuition has been received. And please believe me when I say that there is nothing personal in my attitude—it is only a matter of sound business.

Yours for ethical conduct,
John Hayden, President

Dear Johnny:

Don't apologize, old pal. That's how it should be—no cash, no course, even if the news about the New Advanced Lessons caught me a little short. But with the bank robbery here in town, I figure I'm a cinch to locate the loot and remit some of the reward money to balance your books. I thought maybe the new course would help me solve the case that much sooner, but it won't take me long. So keep it strictly cash-and-carry and you'll be hearing from me.

All the best,
Wally

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The Watchful Eye Detective School
Parker Building
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Your mention of a bank robbery interests me. It would certainly seem hat Lettyville (pop. 3000, I believe) is blessed with more crime for its size han any aspiring detective has a right to expect. I recall two murders you vere able to solve with my personal help, and now you say there has been ı bank robbery.

You'd better let me have the details as it is our policy to assist our tudents in every possible way. So I'll be glad to take time out of my ɔusy schedule to give you some pointers.

Cooperatively,
John Hayden

P.S. I am sending along Lesson Number One of the Advanced Course—*The Detective, Society's Watchdog*—feeling certain that with my help ou will solve the bank robbery and get the reward.

Dear Johnny:

You're the greatest, old pal. I knew you wouldn't let me down—on he lessons, I mean. I think I can handle the robbery bit okay, but here's he dope on it.

Last Wednesday I was busy in the grocery store where I've got to work ıntil I'm old enough to get my private op's license, which won't be for hree years yet. I was packing some prunes for Mrs. Porter when it ɔounded like somebody was getting killed outside. I dashed out and old Silas Stone, President of the Lettyville National Bank, was blowing his gaskets all over Main Street—not being killed, just yelling he'd been obbed, which was just as bad from his point of view because he loves ı buck like a piece of his own skin. When you stash cash in his crib you ɔractically have to leave your thumbs to get it out again—that's how he s. So when some joker jabbed a rod in his ribs and took potluck out ɔf the safe, old Silas died a little from force of habit.

That was how it happened, he said—one guy with a satchel and a gun. The bandit got away on foot—into Gordon's Grove, a brambly mess of ocks and untended timber across the railroad tracks. He probably fig- ıred a getaway car would be too conspicuous in front of the bank and ıad it ready to roll on a back road somewhere.

Everybody figured it that way while Sheriff Smiley Keenan ran around n circles gathering in a posse. They took out after the bank buster but couldn't go with them because I had to mind the store.

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And old Smiley got his man. You see, Smiley owns a shotgun that's smarter than he is. It's got a range wide enough to hit somebody running west even if the Sheriff fires it east. So when Smiley caught sight of the guy he just shut his eyes and blasted away and that old cannon brought the crook down. They carried him back to the jail and Doc Pierce patched him up after bailing a bucketful of buckshot out of him and said he might live or he might not. And I guess Doc Pierce was right because he only came to yesterday, staying unconscious so long they figured he might serve out his sentence asleep.

So that's how it happened, Johnny old pal, with the case at a standstill right now. Lots of time on my hands. I've got Lesson Number One —*The Detective, Society's Watchdog*—down pat, so why not send along Lesson Number Two? I might as well be boning up on it while I ponder some of the more complicated aspects of the robbery—figuring out how to grab the reward.

Hopefully,
Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Watts:

What robbery, you numskull? What reward? I'm writing this from home—on my own time—to ask how you plan to reap a reward from a case someone else solved while you were sweeping out the grocery store. I know the answer, of course. You used the robbery as a clever way to get a $20.00 course for $1.98. There should be laws protecting city bumpkins like me from country slickers like you. But it's all over now. If you want the rest of the course, send a check for $18.02 and not one cent less. When the check clears, you'll get the other lessons.

In deep disgust,
Johnny Hayden

Dear Johnny:

You're wrong about this case being over. It's just starting. I guess I neglected to tell you that while old Smiley caught the bank robber all right, he didn't find the loot which is about par for his brainless brand of sleuthing. So now Smiley and everybody else in Lettyville spend their days in and around Gordon's Grove rooting under rocks like pigs after peanuts.

I'm betting they won't find anything though because that's a pretty

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rough stretch of country and the fugitive must have figured he was fouled up and buried the boodle real smart. Otherwise he'd have had it with him.

That's why I haven't bothered to look and neither has Father Frank. We just sit around discussing theology and waiting for new developments on which I'll keep you posted.

Yours for more trust in people,
Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

I refuse to apologize for blowing my top. It was your fault for withholding data. And now let me suggest that you get out and start hunting for that stolen money. As a graduate of Watchful Eye you should be up and doing rather than sitting around on your fanny telling Father Frank how good a detective you are, which is probably the main gist of your discussions.

Still a little disgusted,
Johnny

P.S. By the way—who is Father Frank?

Dear Johnny:

Father Frank is the bank robber's brother. No new developments. Lots of time, though, to learn Lesson Number Two—if I had it.

Still a little hopeful,
Wally

P.S. By the way—what is the title of Lesson Number Two?

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Enclosed find Advanced Lesson Number Two—*Some Aspects of Search and Seizure*— Now how about a little cooperation on this case? You said Father Frank, whom I assume to be a priest, is the prisoner's brother. Explain. One of the first requirements of a good detective is careful attention to detail.

Yours for more careful reports,
Johnny

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Dear Johnny:

You're right about my sending in ragged reports. Guess I'm concentrating on the case so hard I've muddled up the minor points. From now on it will be different.

I heard all about a priest being in town before he dropped into the store. They said (1) he'd heard about the bank robbery and knew his black-sheep brother was in this neighborhood; (2) he came to Lettyville to check up; (3) he identified the unconscious felon as his own flesh and blood.

He came into the store around noon, the second day he was in town. He walked up to the counter. I said, "Hello, Father." He said, "Hello, son." I said, "Can I help you?" He said, "Yes, you can. I need a tube of toothpaste." So I sold him the brand we make an extra two cents on—it's as good as any other. Then I said, "I'm sorry about your brother." He said, "Thank you, my son, for your sympathy." I said, "How is he?" He said, "He has regained consciousness but the Sheriff won't let me talk to him today. In the meantime, perhaps you can recommend a restaurant." I said, "Mrs. Porter's is the only one in town," and he said, "I know. I sampled her bacon and eggs this morning, but she seems to be closed." I said, "She'll be open in about twenty mintues. She closes up after breakfast to give piano lessons." He said, "Thank you very much. I'll walk down and wait." And he left.

I think that covers every detail, Johnny old pal. All the facts word for word. He's staying at Mrs. Kane's boarding house, and came back about nine o'clock for a tube of shaving cream. I closed up the store—we stay open till nine on Fridays only—and walked home with him. He said they were going to let him talk to his brother the next day. No other new developments.

By the way, Johnny, the New Advanced Course is the greatest. You can be proud of it. You plugged up a lot of holes you left open in the first course.

Yours for complete detail,
Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

When I said I wanted details, I meant important ones. You didn't have to go overboard. Most of what you wrote in your last letter was a waste of time. You could have summed it up in a couple of sentences.

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But the main point is that you go out and get to work. Find that loot or somebody else will. A detective cannot be lazy. He's got to work and work hard.

Yours for more ambition,
Johnny

Dear Johnny:

You're dead right as usual. An op has to work hard and I did. It was hard work sitting around just waiting. But that's about over now. Father Frank will make his move tomorrow, I think. Then I'll have him arrested, snag the swag, and everything will be fine.

Keep poised for the payoff,
Wally

WESTERN UNION DL NYC

WALTER WATTS
LETTYVILLE N.Y.

HAVE YOU GONE OUT OF YOUR MIND STOP PRIESTS DO NOT ROB BANKS STOP AND WHEN I SAY STOP I MEAN STOP STOP BUT IF THIS WIRE ARRIVES TOO LATE AND YOU HAVE BEEN RUN OUT OF TOWN OR WORSE DON'T MENTION TO ANYONE YOU ARE A GRADUATE OF WATCHFUL EYE STOP DO ME THIS LAST FAVOR FOR OLD TIMES SAKE STOP

JOHN HAYDEN

Dear Johnny:

You should pay more attention to detail, Johnny old pal—you ought to reread the lesson in the first course titled *Mastering the Meaning of Minutiae.* I didn't say Father Frank was a priest. I said they *told* me he was a priest, but I knew right away he wasn't because I'm a demon for detail. I called him Father Frank but you can't blame me for that. I didn't have any other name.

But anyhow, the case is all finished. He talked to his brother, found out where the loot was—that was why he came to town in the first place—and I followed him with a State Trooper. Now he is in a cell next to his brother who is sitting up and taking nourishment.

We got the whole story. Frank was supposed to meet his brother with the getaway car out behind Gordon's Grove but the roads twist out there and he got lost. Then, when he heard the loot hadn't been located, he

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thought of the priest disguise and came right into town to talk to his brother. It almost worked too. It probably would have worked if I hadn't studied your lessons real hard.

I'm not happy, though, Johnny. There's a sour note in the picture—the reward. Old Silas never did say how much he would give and it turned out to be a measly $10.00. So all I got was the satisfaction of being a good op, but that doesn't pay for the rest of the New Advanced Course.

Yours in despair,
Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Too bad about the reward, but what really counts is playing the game and winning. Personal satisfaction means more than money any day in the week and you'll find the money to pay for the New Advanced Course. You've got grit and determination, Wally-boy.

One thing I'm curious about—how did you know Father Frank wasn't a real priest? You didn't mention that in any of your earlier letters.

Curiously,
Johnny

Dear Johnny:

Yes, I did—in my detailed report. But I can't even think about it now. I feel pretty low. All I can think about is that New Advanced Course I want so bad—and didn't get.

Yours in sorrow,
Wally

121 Sixth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Wally:

Enclosed find the last four lessons of the New Advanced Course. I'll charge it off to something—experience maybe. So now that your blackmail has worked again, answer my question: How did you know Father Frank wasn't a priest?

In desperation,
Johnny

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Dear Johnny:

That was easy. Show me a priest who eats bacon on Friday and I'll show you a guy who isn't a priest. Therefore he's something else, so you just keep a watchful eye on him and find out what.

You're top-drawer, Johnny old pal, for sending me the New Advanced Lessons. I'll study like crazy and make you proud of me.

Yours for devotion to detail,

Walter A. Watts
(the A is for Alert)

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a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	MARGERY ALLINGHAM
TITLE:	*Family Affair*
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Albert Campion
LOCALE:	London
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*What happened at 29 Chestnut Grove was a remarkable parallel to the famous old "Mary Celeste" mystery—with two differences: 29 was a house, not a ship; and Mr. Campion was called in to solve the modern mystery.*

THE NEWSPAPERS WERE CALLING the McGill house in Chestnut Grove "the villa Mary Celeste" before Chief-Inspector Charles Luke noticed the similarity between the two mysteries and that so shook him that he telephoned Albert Campion and asked him to come over.

They met in the Sun, a discreet pub in suburban High Street, and stood talking in the small bar-parlor which was deserted at that time of day.

"The two stories *are* alike," Luke said, picking up his drink. He was at the height of his career then, a dark, muscular man, high-cheekboned and packed with energy; and as usual he was talking nineteen to the dozen forcing home his points with characteristic gestures of his long hands. "I read the rehash of the *Mary Celeste* mystery in the *Courier* this morning and it took me to the fair. Except that she was a ship and 29 Chestnut Grove is a semi-detached suburban house, the two desertion stories are virtually the same—even to the half-eaten breakfast left on the table in each case. It's uncanny, Campion."

The quiet, fair man in the horn-

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rimmed glasses stood listening affably, as was his habit. And as usual, he looked vague and probably ineffectual; in the shadier corners of Europe it was said that no one ever took him seriously until just about two hours too late. At the moment he appeared faintly amused. The thumping force of Luke's enthusiasms always tickled him.

"You think you know what has happened to the McGill couple, then?" he ventured.

"The hell I do!" The policeman opened his small black eyes to their widest. "I tell you it's the same tale as the classic mystery of the *Mary Celeste*. They've gone like a stain under a bleach. One minute they were having breakfast together like every other married couple for miles around and the next they were gone, sunk without trace."

Mr. Campion hesitated. He looked a trifle embarrassed. "As I recall the story of the *Mary Celeste* it had the simple charm of the utterly incredible," he said at last. "Let's see: she was a brig brought into Gib by a prize crew of innocent sailormen who had a wonderful tale to tell. According to them, she was sighted in mid-ocean with all her sails set, her decks clean, her lockers tidy, but not a soul on board. The details were fascinating. There were three cups of tea on the captain's table and they were still warm to the touch. There was a trunk of female clothes, small enough to be a child's, in his cabin. There was a cat asleep in the galley and a chicken ready for stewing in a pot on the stove." Campion sighed gently. "Quite beautiful," he said, "but witnesses also swore that with no one at the wheel she was still dead on course and that seemed a little much for the court of inquiry. After kicking it about as long as they could, they finally made the absolute minimum award."

Luke glanced at him sharply.

"That wasn't the *Courier's* angle last night," he said. "They called it the 'world's favorite unsolved mystery'."

"So it is!" Mr. Campion was laughing. "Because nobody wants a prosaic explanation of fraud and greed. The mystery of the *Mary Celeste* is a prime example of the story which really is a bit *too* good to spoil, don't you think?"

"I don't know. It's not an idea which occurred to me." Luke sounded slightly irritated. "I was merely quoting the main outlines of the two tales—1872 and the *Mary Celeste* is a bit before my time. On the other hand, 29 Chestnut Grove is definitely my business and you can take it from me no witness is being allowed to use his imagination in this inquiry. Just give your mind to the details, Campion."

Luke set his tumbler down on the bar and began ticking off each item on his fingers.

"Consider the couple," he said. "They sound normal enough. Peter

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McGill was twenty-eight and his wife Maureen a year younger. They'd been married three years and got on well together. For the first two years they had to board with his mother while they were waiting for a house. That didn't work out too well, so they rented a couple of rooms from Maureen's married sister. That lasted for six months and then they got the offer of this house in Chestnut Grove."

"Any money troubles?" Mr. Campion asked.

"No." The Chief clearly thought the fact remarkable. "Peter seems to be the one lad in the family who had nothing to grumble about. His firm—they're locksmiths in Aldgate, he's in the office—are very pleased with him. His reputation is that he keeps within his income and he's recently had a raise in salary. I saw the senior partner this morning and he's genuinely worried, poor old boy. He liked the young man and had nothing but praise for him."

"What about Mrs. McGill?"

"She's another good type. Steady, reliable, kept on at her job as a typist until a few months ago when her husband decided she should retire to enjoy the new house and raise a family. She certainly did her housework. The place is still like a new pin and they've been gone six weeks."

For the first time Mr. Campion's eyes darkened with interest. "Forgive me," he said, "but the police seem to have come into this disappearance very quickly. What are you looking for, Charles? A body? Or bodies?"

Luke shrugged. "Not officially," he said, "but one doesn't have to have a nasty mind to wonder. We came in to the investigation quickly because the alarm was given quickly. The circumstances were extraordinary and the family got the wind up. That's the explanation of that." He paused and stood for a moment hesitating. "Come along and have a look," he said, and his restless personality was a live thing in the confined space. "We'll come back and have another drink after you've seen the setup—I've got something really recherché here. I want you in on it."

Mr. Campion followed him out into the network of trim little streets lined with bandbox villas, each set in a nest of flower garden.

"It's just down the end here and along to the right," Luke said, nodding toward the end of the avenue. "I'll give you the rest of it as we go. On the twelfth of June, Bertram Heskith, a somewhat overbright specimen who is the husband of Maureen's elder sister—the one they lodged with two doors down the road before Number 29 became available—dropped round to see them as he usually did just before eight in the morning. He came in at the back door which was standing open and found a half-eaten breakfast for two on the table in the

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smart new kitchen. No one was about, so he pulled up a chair and sat down to wait."

Luke's long hands were busy as he talked and Mr. Campion could almost see the bright little room with the built-in furniture and the pot of flowers on the window ledge.

"Bertram is a toy salesman and one of a large family," Luke went on. "He's out of a job at the moment but is not despondent. He's a talkative man, a fraction too big for his clothes now, and he likes his nip—but he's sharp enough. He'd have noticed at once if there had been anything at all unusual to see. As it was, he poured himself a cup of tea out of the pot under the cosy and sat there waiting, reading the newspaper which he found lying open on the floor by Peter McGill's chair. Finally it occurred to him that the house was very quiet and he put his head round the door and shouted up the stairs. When he got no reply he went up and found the bed unmade, the bathroom still warm and wet with steam, and Maureen's everyday hat and coat lying on a chair with her familiar brown handbag on it. Bertram came down, examined the rest of the house, then went on out into the garden. Maureen had been doing the laundry before breakfast. There was linen, almost dry, on the clothesline and a basket lying on the grass under it, but that was all. The little rectangle of land was quite empty."

As his deep voice ceased, he gave Campion a sidelong glance.

"And that, my lad, is that," he said. "Neither Peter nor Maureen has been seen since. When they didn't show up, Bertram consulted the rest of the family and after waiting for two days, they went to the police."

"Really?" Mr. Campion was fascinated in spite of himself. "Is that *all* you've got?"

"Not quite but the rest is hardly helpful." Luke sounded almost gratified. "Wherever they are, they're not in the house or garden. If they walked out they did it without being seen—which is more of a feat than you'd expect because they had interested relatives and friends all round them—and the only things that anyone is sure they took with them are a couple of clean linen sheets. 'Fine winding sheets,' one lady called them."

Mr. Campion's brows rose behind his big spectacles.

"That's a delicate touch," he said. "I take it there is no suggestion of foul play?"

"Foul play is becoming positively common in London. I don't know what the old Town is coming to," Luke said gloomily, "but this setup sounds healthy and happy enough. The McGills seem to have been pleasant normal young people and yet there are one or two little items which make one wonder. As far as we can find out, Peter was not on his usual train to the City that

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morning, but we have one witness —a third cousin of his—who says she followed him up the street from his house to the corner just as she often did on weekday mornings. At the top of the street she went one way and she assumed that as usual he went the other, but no one else seems to have seen him and she's probably mistaken. Well, now, here we are. Stand here for a minute."

He had paused on the pavement of a narrow residential street, shady with plane trees and lined with pairs of pleasant little houses, stone-dashed and bay-windowed, in a style which is now a little out of fashion.

"The next gate along here belongs to the Heskiths," he went on, lowering his voice a tone or so. "We'll walk rather quickly past there because we don't want any more help from Bertram at the moment. He's a good enough chap but he sees himself as the watchdog of his sister-in-law's property and the way he follows me round makes me self-conscious. His house is Number 25—the odd numbers are on this side—29 is two doors along. Now Number 31, which is actually adjoined to 29 on the other side, is closed. The old lady who owns it is in the hospital; but in 33 there live two sisters who are aunts of Peter's. They moved there soon after the young couple.

"One is a widow," Luke sketched a portly juglike silhouette with his hands, "and the other is a spinster who looks like two yards of pump-water. Both are very interested in their nephew and his wife but whereas the widow is prepared to take a more or less benevolent view of her young relations, the spinster, Miss Dove, is apt to be critical. She told me Maureen didn't know how to budget her money and I think that from time to time she'd had a few words with the girl on the subject. I heard about the 'fine linen sheets' from her. Apparently she'd told Maureen off about buying something so expensive but the young bride had saved up for them and she'd got them."

Luke sighed. "Women are like that," he said. "They get a yen for something and they want it and that's all there is to it. Miss Dove says she watched Maureen hanging them out on the line early in the morning of the day she vanished. There's one upstairs window in her house from which she can just see part of the garden at 29 if she stands on a chair and clings to the sash."

He grinned. "She happened to be doing just that at about half-past six on the day the McGills disappeared and she insists she saw them hanging there—the sheets, I mean. She recognized them by the crochet on the top edge. They're certainly not in the house now. Miss Dove hints delicately that I should search Bertram's home for them!"

Mr. Campion's pale eyes had narrowed and his mouth was smiling.

"It's a honey of a story," he mur-

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iured. "A sort of circumstantial istory of the utterly impossible. 'he whole thing just can't have appened. How very odd, Charles.)id anybody else see Maureen that ıorning? Could she have walked ut of the front door and come up ıe street with the linen over her rm unnoticed? I am not asking *ould* she but *could* she?"

"No." Luke made no bones about . "Even had she wanted to, which unlikely, it's virtually impossible. 'here are the cousins opposite, you ee. They live in the house with the ed geraniums over there, directly ı front of number 29. They are ome sort of distant relatives of 'eter's. A father, mother, five mar-iageable daughters—it was one of hem who says she followed Peter p the road that morning. Also here's an old Irish granny who sits p in bed in the window of the ront room all day. She's not very eliable—for instance, she can't re-ıember if Peter came out of the ouse at his usual time that day—ut she would have noticed if Mau-een had done so. No one saw Mau-een that morning except Miss)ove, who, as I told you, watched er hanging linen on the line. The aper comes early; the milkman eard her washing machine from he scullery door when he left his ottles but he did not see her."

"What about the postman?"

"He's no help. He's a new man n the round and can't even re-ıember if he called at 29. It's a long street and, as he says, the houses are all alike. He gets to 29 about 7:25 and seldom meets anybody at that hour. He wouldn't know the McGills if he saw them anyhow. Come on in, Campion—take a look round and see what you think."

Mr. Campion followed his friend up a narrow garden path to where a uniformed officer stood on guard before the front door. He was aware of a flutter behind the curtains in the house opposite and a tall, thin woman with a determinedly blank expression walked down the path of the next house but one and bowed to Luke meaningly as she paused at her gate before going back.

"Miss Dove," said Luke unnecessarily, as he opened the door of Number 29 Chestnut Grove.

The house had few surprises for Mr. Campion. It was almost exactly as he had imaged it. The furniture in the hall and front room was new and sparse, leaving plenty of room for future acquisitions; the kitchen-dining-room was well lived in and conveyed a distinct personality. Somone without much money, but who liked nice things, had lived there. He or she—and he suspected it was a she—had been generous too, despite her economies, if the "charitable" calendars and packets of gypsy pegs bought at the door were any guide. The breakfast table had been left exactly as Bertram Heskith had found it and his cup was still there.

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The thin man in the horn-rimmed glasses wandered through the house without comment, Luke at his heels. The scene was just as stated. There was no sign of hurried flight, no evidence of packing, no hint of violence. The dwelling was not so much untidy as in the process of being used. There was a pair of man's pajamas on the stool in the bathroom and a towel hung over the edge of the basin to dry. The woman's handbag and coat on a chair in the bedroom contained the usual miscellany and two pounds three shillings, some coppers, and a set of keys.

Mr. Campion looked at everything—the clothes hanging neatly in the cupboards, the dead flowers still in the vases; but the only item which appeared to hold his attention was the photograph of a wedding group which he found in a silver frame on the dressing table.

He stood before it for a long time apparently fascinated, yet it was not a remarkable picture. As is occasionally the case in such photographs, the two central figures were the least dominant characters in the entire group of vigorous, laughing wedding guests. Maureen, timid and gentle, with a slender figure and big dark eyes, looked positively scared of her own bridesmaid, and Peter, although solid and with a determined chin, had a panic-stricken look about him which contrasted with the cheerfully assured grin of the best man.

"That's Heskith," said Luke "You can see the sort of chap he is —not one of nature's noblemen, but not a man to go imagining things When he says he felt the two were there that morning, perfectly normal and happy as usual, I believe him."

"No Miss Dove here?" said Campion, still looking at the group photograph.

"No. That's her sister though deputizing for the bride's mother And that's the girl from opposite the one who thinks she saw Peter go up the road."

Luke put a forefinger over the face of the third bridesmaid "There's another sister here and the rest are cousins. I understand the pic doesn't do the bride justice Everybody says she was a very pretty girl . . ." He corrected himself "Is, I mean."

"The bridegroom looks like a reasonable type to me," murmured Mr. Campion. "A little apprehensive, perhaps."

"I wonder." Luke spoke thoughtfully. "The Heskiths had another photo of him and perhaps it's more marked in that—but don't you think there's a kind of ruthlessness in that face, Campion? It's not quite recklessness—more, I'd say, like decision. I knew a sergeant in the war with a face like that. He was mild enough in the ordinary way but once something shook him he acted fast and pulled no punches whatever. Well, that's neither here nor

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here. Come and inspect the clothesine and then, Heaven help you, 'ou'll know as much as I do."

Luke led the way to the back and tood for a moment on the concrete ath which ran under the kitchen vindow separating the house from he small rectangle of shorn grass vhich was all there was of a garlen.

A high hedge and rustic fencing eparated it from the neighbors on he right, and at the bottom there vas a garden shed and a few fruit rees; on the left, the greenery in he neglected garden of the old lady vho was in the hospital had grown p high so that a green wall creened the garden from all but he prying eyes of Miss Dove who, t that moment, Mr. Campion susected, as standing on a chair and linging to a sash to peer at them.

Luke indicated the empty line lung across the grass. "I had the nen brought in," he said. "The Ieskiths were worrying and there eemed no earthly point in leaving : out to rot."

"What's in the shed?"

"A spade and fork and a lawn nower," said Luke promptly. Come and look. The floor is beatn earth and if it's been disturbed ı thirty years I'll eat my hat in 'rafalgar Square. I suppose we'll ave to dig it up in the end but 'e'll be wasting our time."

Mr. Campion went over and lanced into the tarred wooden hut. : was tidy and dusty and the floor was dry and hard. Outside, a dilapidated pair of steps leaned against the six-foot brick wall which marked the boundary.

Mr. Campion tried the steps gingerly. They held firmly enough, so he climbed up to look over the wall to the narrow path which separated it from the fence in the rear garden of the house in the next street.

"That's an old right of way," Luke said. "It leads down between the two residential roads. These suburban places are not very matey, you know. Half the time one street doesn't know the next. Chestnut Grove is classier than Philpott Avenue which runs parallel with it."

Mr. Campion descended and dusted his hands. He was grinning and his eyes were dancing.

"I wonder if anybody there noticed her," he said. "She must have been carrying the sheets."

Luke turned round slowly and stared at him.

"You're not suggesting she simply walked down here and over the wall and out! In the clothes she'd been washing in? It's crazy. Why should she? And did her husband go with her?"

"No, I think he went down Chestnut Grove as usual, doubled back down this path as soon as he came to the other end of it near the station, picked up his wife, and went off with her through Philpott Avenue to the bus stop. They'd only have to get to the Broadway to find a cab, you see."

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Luke's dark face still wore an expression of complete incredulity.

"But for Peter's sake *why?*" he demanded. "Why clear out in the middle of breakfast on a washday morning? And why take the sheets? Young couples can do the most unlikely things—but there are limits, Campion! They didn't take their savings bank books, you know. There's not much in them but they're still there in the writing desk in the front room. What in the world are you getting at, Campion?"

The thin man walked slowly back to the patch of grass.

"I expect the sheets were dry and she'd folded them into the basket before breakfast," he began slowly. "As she ran out of the house they were lying there and she couldn't resist taking them with her. The husband must have been irritated with her when he saw her with them, but people are like that. When they're running from a fire they save the oddest things."

"But she wasn't running from a fire."

"Wasn't she!" Mr. Campion laughed. "Listen, Charles. If the postman called, he reached the house at 7:25. I think he did call and delivered an ordinary plain business envelope which was too commonplace for him to remember. It would be the plainest of plain envelopes. Well then: who was due at 7:30?"

"Bert Heskith. I told you."

"Exactly. So there were five minutes in which to escape. Five minutes for a determined, resourceful man like Peter McGill to act promptly. His wife was generous and easy-going, remember, and so thanks to that decisiveness which you yourself noticed in his face, he rose to the occasion.

"He had only five minutes Charles, to escape all those powerful personalities with their jolly avid faces whom we saw in the wedding group. They were all living remarkably close to him—ringing him round as it were—so that it was a ticklish business to elude them. He went out the front way so that the kindly watchful eyes would see him as usual and not be alarmed.

"There wasn't time to take anything at all and it was only because Maureen, flying through the garden to escape the back way, saw the sheets in the basket and couldn't resist her treasures that she salvaged them. She wasn't quite so ruthless as Peter. She had to take something from the old life, however glistening were the prospects for . . ."

Campion broke off abruptly Chief-Inspector Luke, with dawning comprehension in his eyes, was already halfway to the gate on the way to the nearest police telephone box.

Mr. Campion was in his own sitting room in Bottle Street, Picca

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dilly, later that evening when Luke called. The Chief-Inspector came in jauntily, his black eyes dancing with amusement.

"It wasn't the Football Pool but the Irish Sweep," he said. "I got the details out of the Promoters. They've been wondering what to do ever since the story broke. They're in touch with the McGills, of course, but Peter has taken every precaution to insure secrecy and he's insisting on his rights. He must have known his wife's tender heart and have made up his mind what he'd do if ever a really big win came off. The moment he got the letter telling him of his luck he put the plan into action."

Luke paused and shook his head admiringly. "I have to hand it to him," he said. "Seventy-five thousand pounds is like a nice fat chicken—plenty and more for two but only a taste for a very big family."

"What will you do?"

"Us? The police? Oh, officially we're baffled. We shall retire gracefully. It's not our business—strictly a family affair."

He sat down and raised the glass his host had handed to him. "Here's to the mystery of the Villa Mary Celeste," he said. "I had a blind spot for it. It foxed me completely. Good luck to them, though. You know, Campion, you had a point when you said that the really insoluble mystery is the one which no one can bring himself to spoil. What put you on to it?"

"I suspect the charm of relatives who call at seven-thirty in the morning," said Mr. Campion.

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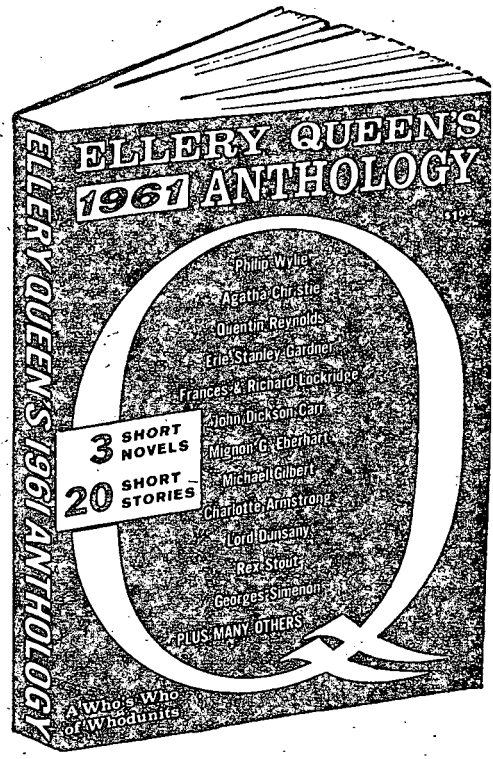

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THE ULTIMATE CLUE

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

THEY DO HAPPEN ONCE OR TWICE IN A DETECTIVE'S LIFETIME—THE NEAT perfect story-book puzzles; and the neatest one that ever happened me was the Magini-Coletti problem—or The Case of the Two-Word olution.

This is a football story, but you don't have to know a punt from a ontoon to figure out the answer. It happened while California was hav- ig that great series of teams under Steve Sealy, the shrewd old 280- ounder whom the sports writers called the Sagacious Seal. This was the ear Cal was rated sixth nationally by the AP and fourth by the UP and l because of a couple of grape-tromping Italians from the Napa Valley.

Jack (for Giacomo) Magini was a runt of a quarterback with an aim ke William Tell's. Game by game he was tearing up all Paul Larson's arsity records, and his favorite target was a rangy alp of an end named ony Coletti, who had adhesive pads on his fingers like a gecko. They'd een playing together since the tenth grade; and a Ph.D. candidate in ie psych department was wondering if he could use them for a thesis n ESP in athletics.

Cal was a 20-point favorite in the Big Game—and in Northern Cali- ornia the Big Game means Cal-Stanford. Oh, there are other games of me bigness in their own regions, like Yale-Harvard and Army-Navy, ut the Big Game is . . . well, it's the Big Game. Point-spread never ieans too much, and sometimes the smart money goes on the underdog; nobody was surprised when the 20-point favorite only just squeaked y at 26-20. But plenty of people were surprised by how it happened— ncluding the Pacific Coast Conference, which hired me to look into it.

Three times Coletti was in the clear without a defender between him nd the goal line, and Magini had all the protection in the world to get is pass away . . . but the ball and the receiver didn't connect. The ass was too long—or the end was too slow reaching his assigned spot. he pass was short—or the receiver had gone out too far. The old rap- ort, the ESP, wasn't working. And who could tell whose fault it was?

Excepting Magini. And Coletti. And possibly the gambling syndicate.

For the pure among you, let it be noted that gambling on football ames isn't usually on a win-or-lose basis. It's by point-spread—that is,

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by the margin of victory. And those three incomplete passes, each c which would have been a sure touchdown, meant that the underdo betters collected, probably in six figures, even though Stanford still lo and Cal racked up an undefeated season.

When the PCC gave me the assignment, the first man I wanted t talk to was old Steve Sealy. But the Seal stalled. "Give me eight hours he said. "Come around late tonight, O'Breen, and maybe I'll have earne your fee for you. I'm *talking* to those two boys—talking like I neve talked between halves. I know them better than their fathers—the on they were born with *and* the ones that hear their confessions. And one of them sold out, I'll know which."

He did, too, I guess; but he never lived to tell me. Not directly. He been dead about two hours when I let myself into his unlocked hom after ten minutes of doorbell pushing. Why will an otherwise intelligen man equip his desk with a paper cutter as lethal as a switchblade? had gone through all that flesh straight to his heart and your guess is a good as mine as to how long he lived with that steel in him.

There was a book on the floor beside him. It was a biography o Knute Rockne and it had left a gap in a shelf of books about the foo ball greats. The shelf was crowded; the Rockne book couldn't have falle

I looked at it while I was waiting for the police. The lower half of th last page was torn out. What was left seemed to be the full text of th last page with some white space under it.

In the ashtray on the desk there were paper ashes, powdered beyon any possibility of reconstruction.

So I could see what had happened—and I knew who killed him.

He had been still barely alive, unable to pull his 280 pounds off th floor. He couldn't get to the desk to write, so he grabbed a book an tore out what made the exact message. But the killer hadn't gone ye he came back and ripped the message out of the dying pudgy hand an burned it.

But I knew what the message was. For perfectionism I had to chec an undamaged copy of the Rockne book and prove what was on th destroyed half page; and then, once we knew which boy to concentrat on, it was easy enough for the police to establish the gambling contac and piece together the rest of a perfect case for Murder One.

All that took time; but the story-book puzzle solved itself as soon a it was stated. For of course that missing half of the last page told m that the murderer wasn't the quarterback. He was

THE END

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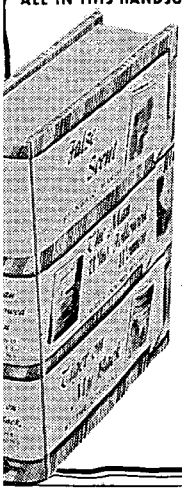

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2 The Case of the WAYLAID WOLF
Here's Perry's late case — what a baffl it is! When he hel pretty Arlene Perr fight for *her* life, l also fights for h OWN life!

3 The Case of the SINGING SKIRT
A luscious your gambling hostess ge Perry into such h water that the D. charges him with b ing an accessory murder!

4 The Case of the MYTHICAL MONKEYS
A winter's eve with corpse in a remo cabin. Perry hasn't *ghost* of a chance solving THIS murde

5 The Case of the DEADLY TOY
A routine "crank" i vestigation leads to warrant for Perry arrest — on a KI NAPPING charge!

6 The Case of the CALENDAR GIRL
After Perry builds air-tight murder ca against her, Daw Manning wants HI to be HER lawyer!

— See other side

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